DON'T NETWORK

The Avant Garde after Networks

Marc James Léger

There is something rotten about network society. Although the information economy promises to create new forms of wealth and social cooperation, the real subsumption of labour under post-Fordism has instead produced a social factory of precarious labour and cybernetic surveillance. In this context people have turned to networks as an ersatz solution to social problems. Networks become the agent of history, a technological determinism that in the best-case scenario leads to post-capitalism but at worst leads to new forms of exploitation and inequality. ***Don't Network*** proposes a third option to technocratic biocapitalism and social movement horizontalism, an analysis of the ways in which vanguard politics and avant-garde aesthetics can today challenge the ideologies of the network society.

"The Hacienda has been built, but as a network economy that turns everyone into cannibalistic creatives that devour themselves and the planet satisfying the insatiable demands of the market. ***Don't Network*** offers a lucid analysis of the new class war going on in contemporary art and politics."

– Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, author of *After the Great Refusal*

"***Don't Network*** presents a compelling argument that outlines and undermines the hold of contemporary positivisms in politics, aesthetics and the social sciences. The book develops Lacanian schemas of incompleteness and Marxist dialectics to advance negation, rather than connectivity, as the core of any potential cultural avant garde, and as part of a manifest vision for radical movements beyond diffuse and atomised moments of resistance."

– Marina Vishmidt, author of *Speculation as a Mode of Production*

Marc James Léger is an independent scholar living in Montreal. He is author of *Brave New Avant Garde* and *Drive in Cinema*, and editor of two volumes of *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today*.

MINOR COMPOSITIONS
www.minorcompositions.info

ISBN 978-1-57027-339-1
90000
9 781570 273391

Minor Compositions Open Access Statement – Please Read

This book is open access. This work is not simply an electronic book; it is the open access version of a work that exists in a number of forms, the traditional printed form being one of them.

All Minor Compositions publications are placed for free, in their entirety, on the web. This is because the free and autonomous sharing of knowledges and experiences is important, especially at a time when the restructuring and increased centralization of book distribution makes it difficult (and expensive) to distribute radical texts effectively. The free posting of these texts does not mean that the necessary energy and labor to produce them is no longer there. One can think of buying physical copies not as the purchase of commodities, but as a form of support or solidarity for an approach to knowledge production and engaged research (particularly when purchasing directly from the publisher).

The open access nature of this publication means that you can:
• read and store this document free of charge
• distribute it for personal use free of charge
• print sections of the work for personal use
• read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place

However, it is against the purposes of Minor Compositions open access approach to:
• gain financially from the work
• sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work
• use the work in any commercial activity of any kind
• profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work
• distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within
educational institutions)

The intent of Minor Compositions as a project is that any surpluses generated from the use of collectively produced literature are intended to return to further the development and production of further publications and writing: that which comes from the commons will be used to keep cultivating those commons. *Omnia sunt communia!*

Support Minor Compositions / Purchasing Books
The PDF you are reading is an electronic version of a physical book that can be purchased through booksellers (including online stores), through the normal book supply channels, or Minor Compositions directly. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university or local library purchase a physical printed copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself.

If you have any questions please contact the publisher: minorcompositions@gmail.com.

DON'T NETWORK

THE AVANT GARDE AFTER NETWORKS

MARC JAMES LÉGER

Don't Network: The Avant Garde after Networks
Marc James Léger

ISBN 978-1-57027-339-1

Cover image: Class Wargames (Richard Barbrook and Ilze Black) play Guy Debord's Game of War, London, September 2008. Xenograph by Alexander Veness.

Cover design by Haduhi Szukis
Interior design by Margaret Killjoy

Released by Minor Compositions 2018

Colchester / New York / Port Watson

Minor Compositions is a series of interventions & provocations drawing from autonomous politics, avant-garde aesthetics, and the revolutions of everyday life.

Minor Compositions is an imprint of Autonomedia
www.minorcompositions.info | minorcompositions@gmail.com

Distributed by Autonomedia

PO Box 568 Williamsburgh Station
Brooklyn, NY 11211
www.autonomedia.org
info@autonomedia.org

CONTENTS

Introduction: Prosthetic Gods 1

One: On Networks and Vulgarity 33

Two: Against Cybernanthropy 71

Three: The Avant Garde as Capitalist Realism 109

Four: Sociality and the New Organizations 139

Five: A Networked Avant Garde? 177

Six: There Is No Inside 205

Seven: Gaming the Class War 243

Conclusion: Pokémon Gods 291

Notes 305

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was written with the support of a Canada Council for the Arts Project Grant to Curators and Critics in Visual Arts. Preliminary research was presented at the conference *Networked Art Histories, 1960s to the Present (In Canada and Elsewhere)* at Concordia University, October 20-22, 2016, and at the Universities Art Association of Canada conference, Concordia University, October 29, 2016, on the panel "Art, Connectivity and Social Movements." A few lines of thought from this book are included in my essay, "Good," for the 2017 exhibition catalogue, *Good Effort*, co-edited by Geir Haraldseth and Michael Birchall for the Rogaland Kunstsenter in Norway, as well as in my essay, "The Avant-Garde After Networks: Strike Art against Cybercapitalism," in Benjamin Halligan and Alexei Penzin's edited book *Post-Multitude: Concepts, Politics and Cultures*. Thanks to Richard Barbrook and Geert Lovink for useful research material, and to Gregory Sholette for inviting me to participate in the e-flux discussion on Yates McKee's *Strike Art*. A few lines are drawn from my review of McKee's book on the *Marx & Philosophy Review of Books*. I am grateful to Stevphen Shukaitis for his helpful comments on the manuscript and for his support of this project. Thanks also to Leo Zausen for his work on the book and to the artists who provided images. Special thanks go to my good comrade, Cayley Sorochan. I not only owe her a debt of gratitude for many of the references included in this study, but for a decade of conversations that no doubt shaped my thinking on the subjects addressed here.

Postcard showing Guy Debord's 1953 gaffito 'Ne travaillez jamais' (Never work) on the Rue de Seine, published in the *Internationale Situationniste*. The slogan was revived during May 1968.

INTRODUCTION

PROSTHETIC GODS

One of the quintessential YouTube memes is a 2006 speech by U.S. Senator Ted Stevens discussing a Net Neutrality Bill. In the audio track we can hear him explain that the Internet is a series of local-to-local connections that is immune to distance, he explains, and is available to the consumer "for massive commercial purposes." Stevens then says: "The Internet is not something that you just dump something on. It's not a big truck. It's a series of tubes. And if you don't understand, those tubes can be filled, and if they're filled, when you put your message in, it gets in line and it's gonna be delayed by anyone that puts into that tube enormous amounts of material, enormous amounts of material."[1] The Senator's speech has been derided for showing a limited understanding of what he is discussing. One of the reasons I mention it here is the fact that I understand Internet technology less than he does. Regardless, my argument in this book is that society, like the Internet, is not simply a series of tubes. For Marxists like me the question of social relations is not easily separated from the notion of the forces of production. In today's discussion about networks, it is typical for the mode of production to be conflated with new social relations and the consequent ideologies that are said to reflect material conditions. For example, Geert Lovink, one of the prominent scholars of network cultures, defines twenty-first century society as "a special effect of technological procedures written into protocols."[2] Similarly, information designer Zhenia Vasilev argues that now that all agents, human and non-human, are part of an electronic and biological meta-body construction, it is no longer possible to distinguish between technology and the body politic.[3]

In the world of art it is in fact possible to represent society as a series of tubes. Think for example of Francis Picabia's mechanomorphic portraits or

the oddly shaped metallic figures in Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*. More literally, there is the Cubo-Futurism of Kazimir Malevich's soon-to-be-industrialized peasant figures, the stylish deco "Tubism" of Fernand Léger's subjects, or the umbilically interconnected anthropological and sci-fi characters in the drawings of Kim Moodie. In West Coast indigenous art ovoid lines connect human, animal and spirit figures, but in Moodie's drawings one gets the impression of less transcendent kinds of relationships. Carolee Schneemann's 1964 performance *Meat Joy* allowed audience members to cavort on stage with naked members of her Kinetic Theater group as well as raw chickens. In a work like Nam June Paik's 1995 *Electronic Superhighway* the United States is a series of synchronized television monitors. Yukinori Yanagi's 1996 installation, *Pacific*, is made of a series of national flags in plexiglass boxes that are filled with coloured sand. Resin tubes connect the boxes and allow ants to move back and forth across the countries, disturbing the visual patterns of the flags. REPOhistory's 2000 project *Circulation* uses representational and real time devices to involve New York City residents in thinking about the circulation of blood as both a commodity and a life-giving substance. In more formalist work, Tomás Saraceno's installation environments create oversize spider webs that complicate Buckminster Fuller's rationally patterned geodesic domes and that recall the informalism of Yayoi Kusama. Closer to the network idea are the maps of both Mark Lombardi and Bureau d'Études, which detail the transnational links between different kinds of networks, from corporate scandals and conspiracies to the transnational organizations of the European Union, with links between think tanks, financial firms, intelligence agencies, weapons makers and media groups. The line drawings of Lombardi were so conceptually simple that it became a trend in the 2000s for artists and curators to make wall displays with lines between almost anything they deemed interconnected.

At an event in New York City in 2014, an art critic asked me to explain why it is that there seems to be nothing new or culturally interesting coming from Toronto. The question missed the obvious fact that in the last twenty years, outside of socially engaged art, nothing particularly new or significant seems to be coming out of anywhere, whether we are talking about art, fashion, film or music. Networked communication would seem to have something to do with this new condition of augmented surfeit. The art world, in its customary reflexivity, calls this condition "contemporaneity," which, when defined, adds very little new insight to culture beyond the effects of global interconnectedness. Have communication technologies eclipsed human culture, according to the slogan: "superior software for the perplexed multitudes"? My sense is that something is indeed happening, but we don't yet know what it is. Or perhaps, as Boris Groys suggests, the digital and bewilderment simply go together, in the flow of things. Artworks are replaced by events and online information about those events, a "rheology" of accident, contingency and precariousness.

Like everything else that is mediated by the Internet, contemporary art now has a low visibility and transitory character.[4] In any case this book is no more a book about the Internet than it is about contemporary art.

Don't Network takes its immediate inspiration from the 1950s graffiti scrawl *ne travaillez jamais* – never work. Reputedly written by Guy Debord, the graffito belongs to an era in which students and workers in France shut down their networks for an entire month, bringing the whole of French society to discuss their grievances and to imagine the kind of society they wished to become. *Ne travaillez jamais* belongs to a host of other May 1968 slogans: Abolish class society; Workers of all countries, enjoy!; Occupy the factories; Arise, ye wretched of the university; Labour unions are whorehouses; Down with consumer society; Commodities are the opium of the people; Culture is an inversion of life; Comrades, stop applauding, the spectacle is everywhere; When the National Assemblies become a bourgeois theatre, all the bourgeois theatres should be turned into national assemblies; Art is dead, let's liberate our everyday life. Many of these slogans were mutually contradictory, such as the set 'Form dream committees' and 'Revolution is the active passage from dream to reality.' Or 'Don't write on walls.'

Don't Network is similarly contradictory, as is all negation in fact. As a directive it automatially begs the questions: What is a network? Why not network? Is there an alternative? However the title of this book is not meant to be taken as a command. Someone can not network and continue to network in the same way that Marxist professors sell their books and anarchist artists apply for government grants. There is a difference between being anti-capitalist and the assumption that being anti-capitalist implies that one is outside the political economy. Rather, economic values must be understood to be conditioned by social values. In other words, one needs to be able to think dialectically – or as people prefer to say today, critically – to understand that human values and political values are not reducible to exchange values, despite the mediations of capital. Ditto regarding the non-reducibility of social values to technology. We live in contradiction. The point of this study is to examine the contradictions that accompany today's network imperative. I have no doubt that if there was a cultural revolution of some kind it would be networked. The question for us, without succumbing to determinism, is the extent to which the network paradigm enables or prevents radicalization. In this regard *Don't Network* engages in a kind of Debordian reverse talk: "the networking of society evolves social links just as surely as linking the social to networks dissolves society."

Some of the slogans mentioned above were written by the Occupation Committee of the Autonomous and Popular Sorbonne University and diffused by various means, including leaflets, comic strips, signs, announcements and graffiti. The Situationists valiantly declared May 1968 to be "the beginning of an era" and "the greatest revolutionary movement in France since the Paris

Commune."[5] The occupations and general strike, they argued, witnessed the return of the proletariat as a historical class, which was now extended to new constituencies and expressed as both collective and individual awareness of the possibility of intervening in history.[6] The success of the strike was that it made people re-examine their lives and rethink their connectivity: "The occupations movement was obviously a rejection of alienated labour; it was a festival, a game, a real presence of people and of time."[7]

Are we alienated today? Or are we more alienated when told that we are alienated? Have we had enough of the "old toad" Debord? Certainly the slogans from 1968 do not have the fast currency of the Apple slogans "think different" and "think outside the box." These are not simply corporate slogans. I have seen similar slogans used by art departments that deliver critical theory content to their student 'customers' and so we can appreciate the extent to which contemporary promotional culture overlaps with information and communication technologies, more fittingly referred to as ICTs. In this network of signs we also find "the world's networking company" and "your world, delivered" (At&T), "get in the game" (ATI), "leading the digital entertainment revolution" (Cirrus), "now that's progressive" (RF Café), "we help you invent the future" (Dow), "building networks for people" (D-Link), "connecting people" (Nokia), "powering what's next" (IDT), "pushing limits" (R&S), "engineered for life" (ITT), "our customers connect with us" (MegaPhase) and "no slogans" (Acorn Computers). Granted, these are not user slogans, but they give us a sense of what passes for radical today.

Being Situationist is maybe good if you want to create a hard-nosed splinter group that fights biocapitalist regulation and responds to the demand to be creative with the retort that one would prefer not to, but it potentially makes it more difficult to survive in today's networked polity. One of the factors defining our historical conjuncture is the fallout from postmodern theories that rejected the pessimism of the Frankfurt School and replaced it with the "enabling theses" of cultural studies, which argued that the dominated classes produce resistant meanings within conditions of exploitation. After cultural studies, the agent of historical change is no longer believed to be the blue-collar industrial proletariat but rather a multitude of competing micro-practices involved in hegemonic struggle.[8] The evident problem for us in today's brave new world of precarity is that neoliberal capitalism can and does champion micro-practices just as surely as it promotes creativity and connectivity as tools of innovation and value creation.

Like postmodernism and cultural studies, the network society proposes new avenues for radical resistance to neoliberal capitalism. For instance, certain versions of post-political micro-politics call for counter-networks and cyber-politics. The strategists of the "coming insurrection," the Invisible Committee, question the fortunes of such "symmetric warfare" between cybernetic power

and networked resistance, which they say is bound to fail when resistance takes on the features of the adversary:

> Today, the most wrongheaded expression of this tragedy of symmetry comes out of the doddering mouths of the new left. What they say is that set against the diffuse Empire, which is structured into a network, but endowed with command centers all the same, there are the multitudes, just as diffuse, structured into a network, but endowed nonetheless with a bureaucracy capable of occupying the command centers when the day comes.[9]

Don't Network mines the contradictions of the existing asymmetry. Hegemonic struggle is not simply an opportunity to reinvent oneself in a world of lifelong learning; one is rather forced to be flexible and creative within conditions that systematically impose autonomy within a risk society in which individuals are increasingly without the traditional safety nets of family and community or even those of corporate and welfare state security and benefits. Whereas revolutionary Marxism critiqued the commodification of culture as part of broader relations of exploitation, the post-1968 theories of Gilles Deleuze, for example, described a process of "subjectivation" and "machinic enslavement," whereby, according to Gerald Raunig, human beings become parts of machines that overcode the social totality.[10] The Marxist understanding of capital as the mediating agent of contemporary social relations is here inverted into the multitudinous bits of temporary and ephemeral singularity that have no need for illusions of autonomy and freedom. People choose to live precarious lives, it would seem, in an economization of life and culture that is chaotic and unstable, and yet, as it happens, thoroughly networked.

And so the beginning of the era of festival that the Situationists proclaimed has been, decades later, reduced to pithy phenomena like flash mobs or Snapchat streaks. The more overarching policy structure, however, involves overhauls like the Lisbon strategy for a knowledge-based economy and the Bologna process for the standardization of education – neoliberal policies that treat knowledge, culture and education in the same way as any economically competitive market. However, if there is such a thing as "market fundamentalism," there is also today a "network fundamentalism" at play in the restructuring of new social, cultural, economic and political formations. Moreover, and notwithstanding the notion that resistance is primary, the network society actively shapes the forms of struggle between the "active" networkers that drive the capitalist economy and the "activist" networks that react to it.

Critique of the Political Economy of Networks

Among the many facets of network ideology is the capitalist business environment in which it has emerged. Referring to the sociology of Manuel Castells, Darin Barney argues that the chief economic model of the "network society" is that of the "network enterprise."A capitalist organizational model, the network enterprise functions ideologically as the archetype for all human communication and exchange. According to Barney, the network enterprise represents:

> a shift from mass standardization to flexible customization as a core value of production, distribution and consumption. In this context, the model of the network – a web of semi-autonomous nodes interconnected by multiple, easily reconfigured ties through which a variety of flows can pass – and the technologies of networked computers engage as a combination particularly apt for achieving flexibility in economic activity.[11]

Critics of neoliberalism understand the "moving contradiction" between, on the one hand, networked supply chains, satellite-connected management, free trade regimes, financialization, deregulation, privatization, offshoring, automation, unpaid prosumer value creation, de-democratization, securitization, surveillance, flexibilization, economic bubbles, inequality, indebtedness and precarity, and, on the other, whatever means of organized resitance there is to capitalist globalization. As Nick Dyer-Witheford argues in his class analysis of the role of computer networks, "cybernetics enterprise has been capital's armourer in a relentless class war waged from above."[12]

Despite its applicability as a business paradigm, the network now extends to all of social life. The Invisible Committee argue that there is nothing human about networked neoliberalism. Based on the model ecology and society of Silicon Valley, the new orthodoxy of creative innovation sees the world as nothing but "platforms of interconnection" where mobile and motivated individuals with high degrees of social and educational capital – Richard Florida's vaunted creative class – work in teams and gravitate around clusters of value production in order to take advantage of whatever is there in order to produce a new niche market.[13] The resulting sociality is neither the traditional face-to-face community nor the anonymous urban metropolis but a new hybrid mediated by technology. "In the 'creative communities' of capital," they write, "people are *bound together by separation itself*. There is no longer any outside from which to distinguish between life and the production of value."[14]

In terms of sociality, there is in fact an outside: all of those people who do not quite fit into this entrepreneurial snake pit of bio-engineered and capitalized community. Despite exaggerated claims concerning the democratization of Internet access, peer-to-peer and many-to-many connections tend to

reproduce existing social inequalities. Consequently, cyber-activism and fractal contagion effects are prone to a remarkable level of ideological inflation. Cyber-utopianism, even when it comes from the left, can lead to strategic mistakes or at least to naive beliefs in the emancipatory effects of new technologies. As the Internet is increasingly used for commercial, propaganda and surveillance purposes, the fantasies of exodus and invisibility become progressively unseemly. According to anti-terrorist advisor Jared Cohen and Google CEO Eric Schmidt,

> there will be people who resist adopting and using technology, people who want nothing to do with virtual profiles, online data systems or smart phones. Yet a government might suspect that people who opt out completely have something to hide and thus are more likely to break laws, and as a counterterrorism measure, that government will build [a] kind of 'hidden people' registry […] If you don't have any registered social-networking profiles or mobile subscriptions, and on-line references to you are usually hard to find, you might be considered a candidate for such a registry.[15]

All of these outsiders can be nevertheless transvalued into the raw material for another kind of networked production public sphere, another social practice platform. The transparent society, in which people with cell phones not only communicate police violence and protest marches, but everything from their lunch to their #dp, reminds one of wartime measures where if you see something you should say something. In this case, upload to YouTube and Instagram. In the network society – or what Tiqqun calls civil war – everything is something and nothing at the same time.[16] It takes millions of web users to turn nothing into something but this same "thing" in the age of digital reproduction is so dispersed that the notion of connection loses all meaning *in advance*. Unlike the mechanical reproduction that Walter Benjamin argued brings the work of art into the sphere of the user-as-critic, digital network culture would seem to pre-empt the time of reflection, adding to the piles of rubbish that Benjamin's poor angel has to rummage through in his online feed. What emerges as a universal function are the networks and technologies that structure social and personal relations. It is clear that we are no longer dealing with modernity nor postmodernity but with a new order of time, neither a faith in progress nor a nihilistic twilight of enlightenment, but a kind of end times catastrophism marked by the fear of revolutionary action.

My first line of argument against the possibility of a fully networked society is that the human subject cannot be a "node" in a network. Based on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Žižekian ideology critique, a radical approach

to subjectivity in the age of networks should reject today's fatal materialisms and propose instead the idea that human subjects are inherently "para-nodal," or "subtracted," as Alain Badiou would say, from full symbolic efficiency. The network society is no more absolute and no more inevitable than any other kind of society. The paradox is that despite our incomplete and alienated selves, we nevertheless generate the links that bring the network society into being. The second line of argument follows both Slavoj Žižek and Badiou in their critique of discursive historicism. The Lacanian theory that is essential to Žižek's so-called "post-Marxism" and to Badiou's philosophy of the event becomes more important today than it was in the 1960s and 70s, if only because of the ways in which capitalist production draws increasingly on the resources of subjectivity, combining, as Gene Ray argues, enjoyment with enforcement, culture machine with war machine.[17] This process, which Ray says is countersigned by the broad petty bourgeois layers of the creative class, was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the 2016 election campaign of Hillary Clinton, endorsed by many for its seemingly progressive identity politics, and at the same time criticized by others, like philosopher Cornel West and social critics Chris Hedges and Thomas Frank, for capitulating to Wall Street interests and the military-surveillance apparatus.[18] As Ray puts it, "theories of subjectivation that do not give due weight to the objective factor of a determining global [capitalist] logic risk lapsing into voluntarism."[19]

One important point of disagreement on today's political left is the struggle for prominence between Marxist critical theory and postmodern or post-structuralist anarchism, a distinction that is complicated by questions of identity. The critique of network ideology further requires that we be sensitive to distinctions between revolutionary theory and the immanentism of second-order cybernetics. Take for instance the example of accelerationism. The premise of the Accelerationist Manifesto is that if the political left is to have a future, it must embrace the accelerationist tendency of capitalism – which is distributed horizontally through The Network and centrally organized as The Plan – leading to collective self-mastery and a post-capitalist technosocial platform. As Robin Mackay and Armen Avenessian put it, the #Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics affirms that "the increasing immanence of the social and technical is irreversible and indeed desirable."[20] However, the desirablity of keeping to the most advanced forms of capitalist production is conceivable only from an imagined communist future. The limit of this fantasy is that it depends on a partial reading of Marx and a thoroughly metaphysical conception of reality. The subject, however, never fully coincides with its context, whether that correspondence is understood as an alienated "first order" relation of control, or a positivized "second order" cybernetics, wherein the subject is conceived to be fully immanent to its surrounding environment. Such immanence is what Tiqqun defines as a "biological model for the teleology of capital."[21]

Only a solidarity of struggles on the left, with greater organizational capacity and effectivity, can mitigate this ideology of techno-spiritualism. This would imply the necessity of networking, even as it is overdeterned by the structures that define today's mostly corporatized electronic interfaces. Inasmuch as this book does not propose, as Marshal McLuhan would have, placing either networks or humans at the centre of our thinking, it does reflect on the enigma presented to us by Jacques Lacan that the signifier engenders what is not there: "there is no subject except through a signifier and for another signifier," extended by Jean-Claude Milner to the notion that with the circulation of network capital, an exchange value represents the subject for another exchange value.[22] Jan van Dijk's view that social networks, the human web, are as old as the development of human speech addresses how it is, to paraphrase Lacan, that the unconscious is structured like a network.[23] Accordingly, the fields of vanguard aesthetics and politics will be given greater intellectual breadth than is usually afforded in today's discourse-based social constructionism and in the libertarian tracts of technophiles.

Negation as Strategy

Dialectical materialism is not necessarily in danger but the practice of dialectics has been tainted by its association with Stalinist communist party orthodoxies. This has led an entire generation of 'postmodern' intellectuals to conflate dialectics with closure, all the while reserving for themselves the actual practice of dialectics under different labels and with slight modifications. To take one example, Michel Foucault writes in *The Birth of Biopolitics*:

> Dialectical logic puts to work contradictory terms within the homogeneous. I suggest replacing this dialectical logic with what I would call strategic logic. A logic of strategy does not stress contradictory terms within a homogeneity that promises their resolution in a unity. The function of strategic logic is to establish the possible connections between disparate terms which remain disparate. The logic of strategy is the logic of connections between the heterogeneous and not the logic of the homogenization of the contradictory. So let's reject the logic of the dialectic…[24]

Nevermind that Foucault's above description of strategic logic has been known since at least the 1920s as critical dialectical realism and nevermind that in this statement Foucault's description has no bearing on the Hegelian doctrine of the concept. The point is simply that in the twentieth century dialectics was reduced by both communist party intellectuals and by their

detractors to the notion of synthesis. The irony of Foucault's version of strategic logic is that his theory of possible connections eventually enabled and endorsed neoliberalism, a new transnational stage of what Henri Lefebvre referred to in 1976 as the "state mode of production," which adapted rather than ended Stalinism.[25] Or as Raoul Vaneigem put it one decade earlier: "anybody can see that capitalism is gradually finding its fulfilment in a planned economy of which the Soviet model is nothing but a primitive form."[26] Vaneigem and Lefebvre's perspective is echoed in Žižek's description of contemporary capitalism as a system that is based on constant self-revolutionizing, a bureaucratic "totalitarianism" that is expressed in biopolitics and the rule of technology.[27] This comparative politics is missed by those who consider today's new forms of biopolitical productivity and subjectivity to be somehow post-ideological.

If Stalinists resisted the open nature of the dialectic this was to preserve the dogma that only the Party could express the consciousness of historical necessity. But now the shoe is on the other foot, and it is the postmodernists who have to account for whether or not their discrediting of Hegel and Marx has served the general interest. The windfall sale of copies of Marx's *Capital* after the 2008 financial crisis seems to contradict that verdict. But one can only say this with modesty since not even Marxists can be certain of any royal road to communism. Today's grassroots activism thus says to us: "when I hear the word dialectics, I reach for my post-structuralism." What are we to reply? Is the opposition between dialectical materialism and discourse theory one of contradiction? Is discourse theory an advancement of critical dialectical realism or its total transformation? One simple way out is to consider that just as dialectical materialism was used to justify the horrors of Stalinism, discourse theory complements today's development of cybernetic governance. The least one can say is that this is exemplary of the dialectical process, an idea that is grasped in its distortion, admitting to the limitation of the idea itself. The problem of dialectics, contradiction and overcoming is inherent to those things that bear its descriptive nomination. The trouble with Stalinism is that it tried in vain to arrest the epistemological problem. The postmodernists made the opposite mistake and attempted to catch the problem by the tail, emphasizing the non-foundational conditions of possibility but without alienation. They took language to be equivalent to the mode of production and just as capitalism exploits labour they downgraded speech, enunciation and intention. Perhaps they mistrusted their own words. If Deleuze thought that words were penetrated by money, Voloshinov argued for a sense of ideology and struggle in the everyday. In Lacanian terms, the subject does not respond to symbolic alienation from an objective distance, from the perspective of metalanguage, but through the impure medium of metapolitics, which is part of the objective process.

With the rise of anti-globalization and new social movements against the consequences of neoliberalism, postmodernism seems somewhat dated, even

though it continues to define much thinking on the left. As Gail Day puts it in *Dialectical Passions*, postmodernism seems remaindered as a concept, with the categories it tried to dispense with – totality, universality and truth – coming once again into intellectual respectability.[28] What Day describes as the "valences of negative thought" has to be part of any discussion of avant-gardism, from Dadaism and Futurism, as she puts it, to abstraction, minimalism and conceptualism. In 2016 many celebrated the one hundred year anniversary of Dada. It is worth remembering Dada's critique of nationalism and militarism, its poetic anti-art refusal of bourgeois conventions. But as Tristan Tzara reflected in 1959, after the dust had settled, "we discovered we were all bourgeois."[29] What we are discovering today, insofar as cadres in the knowledge and creative industries have now absorbed the artistic critique, as Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello describe it, and everyone now believes they are anti-bourgeois in one way or another, is that we are all petty-bourgeois.[30] Can culture contribute to overcoming neoliberalism? The avant-garde reply is that the affirmationist aspects of artistic autonomy in a world of alienation requires and involves political engagement.

The Avant Garde in the Age of the Global Petty Bourgeoisie

In my own work, I have attempted to register the problem of the capitalist administration of culture in terms of the conflict between the policy shift towards creative industries and the activist orientation of much contemporary art since at least the 1999 "Battle in Seattle" protests against the World Trade Organization. My edited book, *Culture and Contestation in the New Century* was originally titled *Spleen: Institutions of Contemporary Cultural Production*.[31] The spleen in question is not that of the nineteenth-century *poète maudit* bohemian social type, who split art off from the praxis of life as a means to condemn bourgeois materialism, nor is it the radicalism of an eventually compromised historical avant garde, which could understand its aesthetic organization of a new life as being analogous to revolutionary politics. Rather, this spleen is the symptom of a new situation of ideological impasse after the postmodern end of history, with its compensatory replacement of class struggle with anti-universalist difference politics. This new variant of spleen is turned against itself as a "post-political" refusal of alternatives to capitalist hegemony, collapsing cultural contestation with the field of power. Today's networked petty bourgeois spleen seeks to épater the avant garde, wherever you might find it. For some this means more exhibitions about minority and countercultural groups, but for the polity as a whole it means subordinating artist-led production to commercial logic, corporate sponsorship and intellectual property regimes. In the creative industries, culture is equated with economic productivity and draws on humanist notions of creativity, talent and skill as resources for exploitation. According to creativity gurus, we are forever living through a renaissance of

innovation. In the age of global markets, however, "legitimate culture" acts as an ersatz placebo. Its main function is to divert attention away from the last remaining vestiges of the socialist struggles of the twentieth century.

In *Brave New Avant Garde* I criticized both the apolitical vacuity of relational aesthetics and the expediency of community art, proposing instead that we repeat Badiou's communist hypothesis with the possibly more problematic "avant garde hypothesis."[32] This hypothesis is problematic because Badiou attempted in his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* to distance a philosophy of the event and the truth procedures of art and politics from the legacy of historical materialism. I nevertheless make the claim for an "avant garde hypothesis" with a sense that Peter Bürger's historicized instances of bohemian, historical and neo-avant gardes are compatible, as "sequences," with Badiou's critique of the notion of the failure of communism and its association with totalitarianism.[33] The avant garde hypothesis is cognizant of Bürger's more pessimistic conclusions on the reification of neo-avant-garde art in terms of culture industry, a thesis that has been extensively chronicled by the art historian Benjamin Buchloh, who states:

> As the new spectatorial subjects voluntarily accepted the annulment of social and political utopian thinking, artistic production sutured itself to the universal reign of spectacularized consumption. Embracing the new technologies and market formations, the new audiences seemed to seriously believe that an expansion of artistic practices into the registers of the culture industry would compensate for the destruction of the emancipatory promises of the avant-garde cultures of the twentieth century.[34]

To abandon the avant garde as a mode of inquiry for politicized art practice is, howewer, and as Badiou himself asserts, to "revert back to capitalism and non-egalitarian dogma."[35] It is not at all surprising that the quiescent "intervallic" period that followed May 1968, a low point for the communist hypothesis that continues to today, has been equally devastating for leftist culture. I am here in agreement with Bruno Bosteels, who reads Badiou's truth event of art as indicating that a communist art is less a matter of specifying the forms of art that would correspond to communism, but rather that there is a communist element in any genuine artistic event that is able to locate a universally accessible truth.[36] Along with other critics of Badiou, however, Bosteels notes that art's ability to distance itself from other social activities conflicts with its political economy and uneven development at the level of social production and reproduction. As John Roberts argues, Badiou's claim of communism as an "invariant" of universal emancipation, as a universal Idea, conflicts with

the historical forms of communism.[37] The tension between the two is resolved inasmuch as a truth procedure contributes to a world that attenuates inequalities and the state of alienation. What is at stake, according to Roberts' reading of Badiou, are the universalist axioms of the communist hypothesis in the absence of a revolutionary movement and leftist party organs.

The post-political principles of today's leftist social movements do seem to alter the terrain for radical cultural praxis from what it was in the postwar period. If at that time both anti-Marxist as well as post-Althusserian schools were weary of reflectionist theories and economic reductionism, this today seems less of a worry, ironically, since both aesthetic and political autonomy are almost automatically integrated into the surface particulars of the "abstract universal" and shorn of the dialectic's radical negativity. In this context, the communist and the avant garde hypotheses are exchanged for the "network" and "cybernetic" hypotheses. For media scholar Alexander Galloway, the "cybernetic hypothesis," as first proposed by Tiqqun, provides a view of the digital humanities for which Marxism and psychoanalysis are now little more than an instrumental hermeneutic that serves a liberal academic methodology and its popularity contests between the topics of sexuality, class, archive, gaze, desire, play and excess.[38] Nevermind that Tiqqun regarded cybernetics to be the new technology of government, itself a reaction to incompleteness theorems and the uncertainty principle, critique for Galloway simply gives way to systems and networks, related to such fields as game theory, rational choice, information science, artificial intelligence, behaviourism and cognitivism, all of which I otherwise refer to here as post-Enlightenment schizo-cynicism and an end of ideology securitization of the capitalist economy and its inevitable crises.[39] Tiqqun argue that cybernetics has become "the avant-garde of all avant-gardes" because it posits the mind as the alpha and omega of the world. In this they simply concede too much to cognitivism and avoid the problems of epistemological obstacle and ontological impossibility. As Žižek puts it, the Lacanian subject is not substantive but corresponds to the Cartesian *cogito* as the subject of the unconscious, which goes against efforts by such new disciplines as object-oriented ontology, for instance, to re-substantialize the subject. There is no thinking subject that is an object like others. When cognitivism attempts to define subject or consciousness as a neuronal process, it fails to explain why such processes require consciousness, other than to understand it as an accidental byproduct. What thus defines the peculiarity of human subjectivity is very the positing of a post-human world from which we would be excluded and against which one would then struggle for more human inclusion.[40]

The conceit that cybernetics involves human and non-human agents effects a fascination with technology which presupposes that post-Fordist society is somehow beyond the perview of either dialectics or psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud, however, long ago addressed how humanity's artificial "prosthetic

organs" bring with them new forms of unhappiness, fear and anxiety.[41] For psychoanalysis, it is finitude, the gap between mind and reality, which accounts for human creativity. The goal of achieving greater seamlessness between the virtual and the real through, say, nanotechnological implants, is not only designed to master nature but to create new forms of nature that drive surplus as the symptomal point and failure of classification.[42] The differences between human and non-human seem to be largely irrelevant to Galloway, however, since intellectual work is now factored as part of a production matrix, with precarious "low-agency scholars" becoming more literate in digital gadgetry than intellectual inquiry.[43] However, to follow the shift from subject to society, production advances as it does because society is rife with antagonisms that make society a fundamental impossibility, a dilemma to which Lacan gave the name big Other. To put it in other words, the problem is that the network society knows nothing of these problems.

In *Brave New Avant Garde* I adapted Bill Readings' analysis of the neoliberal managerial criteria that are now used in universities and museums – performance indicators, opinion polls, cost-benefit analyses, economic development statistics, marketing objectives, etc. – in order to re-contextualize Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach to culture as a structure of class relations.[44] Based on the decay of the bourgeois habitus and the rise to prominence of the petty-bourgeois habitus, I updated Bürger's historicist model of the development of the bourgeois field of aesthetic autonomy by adding to it an additional layer that shifts from the stage of the modern, "international" bourgeois era to that of today's new petty bourgeois "global" era.[45] The function of art now changes from the role assigned to it by bourgeois ideology – the "portrayal of individual self-understanding" – to that of allodoxia, which is based on anxiety about one's class status, transposed onto lifestyle concerns. For Bourdieu, the petty-bourgeois habitus emphasizes the anti-hierarchical, anti-authority and anti-bourgeois motifs of the counterculture, a stress on the euphemization of avant-garde seriousness, psychological therapy, an imperative of sexual relation, the taste for the new, new media, the fun ethic and distance from market forces.[46] In terms of cultural production, the shift from the bourgeois to the petty-bourgeois era marks a movement away from individual studio art to that of a networked form of project work within the deregulated conditions of general intellect, where affect and ambient connectivity replace skill and knowledge. This shift by and large displaces some of the conditions of possibility for the historical avant gardes, from Dada and Constructivism to Surrealism and Situationism, since, according to Readings, the global petty bourgeoisie refuses a specifically political self-conception in favour of a purely economic, classless and post-historical logic of administration.[47] Consequently, the status of the work of art shifts from autonomous, avant-garde production to biocapitalist indexes of market value, as noticed for instance in the trend in neoliberal

policy to cut the budgets of arts programmes that do not demonstrate revenue-generating potential, or, as a corollary of this, to fund programmes that optimize output, regardless of the quality of the work or its contribution to culture.[48] The alternative status of the work of art in the age of the global petty bourgeoisie is the activist art that reacts to these same market measures and forms of economic management. In these circumstances leftist collectivism as well as work that is based on identity politics and single issues supplements the thesis of classlessness and the refusal of all forms of constituted power. These practices integrate relatively smoothly, on an ideological level, with the ameliorist social mandates of the neoliberalized university and museum.

In *Drive in Cinema*, a book dedicated to the study of film as a means to view social practice art through a different lens, I proposed the triad of petty-bourgeois and anarchist *anti-art*, proletarian and communist *anti-anti-art*, and bourgeois capitalist *anti-art art*.[49] These three categories are associated with Gene Ray's distinction between a *critically affirmative art* (anti-art art) that operates comfortably within the art system, with *avant gardes* (anti-anti-art) that overcome theories of autonomy and express political commitment, and with anti-systemic *nomadic practices* (anti-art) that refuse to invest in autonomy as well as the institutions of art.[50] I suggested that this division corresponds closely enough to Lacan's Discourse of the Hysteric (anti-art), Discourse of the Analyst (anti-anti-art) and Discourse of the University (anti-art art). What I did not mention at that time and will be elaborated in this book is that the Discourse of the Master is the name that we could give to the most absolute or "aristocratic" definition of Art. I have also proposed, following a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach, that the structure of fantasy can be seen to span the historical divide between the bourgeois avant-garde period and today's global petty-bourgeois creative industry era, where the fantasy of avant-gardist effectiveness covers over the reality of neoliberal ideology and post-Fordist working conditions. These are reversible, "transferential" prospects, as can be noticed for instance in the injunction by creative industry promoters to renew the field of culture by becoming the next Leonardo or Picasso, or, alternatively, when artists see vanguardism as a trap to be avoided and instead over-identify with the worst features of neoliberalism.[51]

Since Lacan's four discourses are essential to the overall approach of *Don't*

analyst	university	master	hysteric
anti-anti-art avant-garde	anti-art art critically affirmative art	art *qua* art autonomous art	anti-art nomadic practices

Network, let us consider the basic premises of his schema. Developed in his seminars XVI to XVIII, from 1968 to 1972, Lacan's "discourse theory" is his means to explain how it is that language makes the social link operative. Because we are dealing with structures of the unconscious, it is necessary to understand that the subject is typically unaware of the structures of discourse. The different mathemes offer variable placements of four fixed elements that refer to subjectivity in terms of the unconscious structured like a language. The symbol '$' refers to the split subject or subject of the unconscious. The symbol 'a' refers to Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a*, otherwise referred to as the object-cause of desire. The *objet a* also stands for the unconscious or the bar of difference that makes social meaning unstable. 'S1' stands for the master signifier, the pure or phallic signifier that is a signifier without a signified. 'S2' refers to the chain of signifiers or knowledge. In each case the top left quadrant refers to the space of the agent of a communication or a command. The top right refers to the space of the Other or addressee. What concerns Lacan is that the structure of communication always in some way fails or is incomplete because the structure of communication is one of impossibility. This impossibility is explained through recourse to the bottom level of these equasions. The bottom left quadrant refers to the hidden symptom of the agent. It represents the function of truth that the agent is unaware of. The bottom right refers to the product of the communication, its surplus *jouissance* and the function of loss.

Briefly explained, the Discourse of the Master is expressed by a master signifier who addresses knowledge (the know-how of the slave) and produces desire as a function of loss. The Master is unaware that split subjectivity conditions his or her existence as the castrated father. In the Discourse of the Analyst desire occupies the place of the analyst who produces transference in his or her relation to the analysand. This discourse results in the symptom as the master signifier and is underwritten by psychoanalysis as the system of knowledge. The Discourse of the Hysteric finds the split subject in the position of an agent who addresses the master signifier and seeks knowledge of his condition as a function of loss. The Hysteric is unaware of his or her desire. Lastly, the Discourse of the University finds that the system of knowledge is in the role of agent and that this knowledge is addressed to a desire that produces the subject. The Discourse of the University is underwritten by the master signifier, which makes the Discourse of the University one of the most vehement discourses since it is unaware of the question of power. In a lecture delivered in 1972 Lacan added to his schema the matheme of the Discourse of the Capitalist, whose structure, as we will see, addresses the conundrum of anti-capitalist movements today. In this discourse, the split subject is the agent who addresses knowledge and produces his or her own desire, one's very self, as loss. Like the University, the Capitalist discourse is underwritten by the master

signifier and so is equally unaware of the question of power.[52]

In my essay on Jean-Luc Godard's *Film Socialisme* in *Drive in Cinema*, I address the perception that contemporary art is little more than a confidence game or ponzi scheme, wherein roughly only one percent of artists in western countries manage to make a living from their work. The value of art is associated with the reality of illusion and the uncanny fact that anything can become the object of aesthetic value and appreciation. Art in this context functions in terms of belief structures that are "interpassive" and that relate questions of subjective judgement to unconscious mechanisms.[53] In this regard, Žižek defines three subject positions that correspond to the discourses of the Hysteric, the University and the Analyst. The idiot (anti-art) is someone who imagines himself beyond the influence of the big Other as an impersonal agency or system of social rules; the moron (anti-art art) is the person who thinks that they can fully know or understand the social rules as a kind of common sense or cultural authority; and thirdly, the imbecile (anti-anti-art) seeks to defy capitalist capture without denying the incompleteness of the social.[54] Žižek's Lacanian reading of Hegel is not simply Kantian, as critics contend, but a post-Kantian, post-transcendental theory that rejects the "totalitarian" tendency within social constructionism towards pre-Kantian metaphysics.[55]

With regard to this programme of radical research, *Don't Network* develops the understanding and implications of the mode of cultural production in the petty bourgeois era with an emphasis on networks and networking as part of the contemporary conditions of labour and the level of technological and social development. In terms of avant-garde contestation, I am concerned to investigate whether and how the Discourse of the Master and the Discourse of the Analyst might have something to offer as alternatives to the prevalence today of the Discourse of the Hysteric (activist art, multitudes) and the Discourse of the University (critical art, new institutionalism, cultural studies, global art). The negation of the negation that is proposed by anti-anti-art is among other things, aside from its utopian or speculative imaginings, a means to address and possibly overcome the contradictions of capital and labour. Anti-anti-art is the name I give to a partisan avant-garde art that is decidedly anti-capitalist but that unlike anti-art and critical art is concerned to either salvage or build the radical institutions of the working class that could correct (and not simply connect) the basic antagonism that pits the 99% against the 1%, the multitude against empire, or the masses against the neoliberal state.

Insofar as the political right has traditionally projected the inherent antagonisms of capitalism onto a foreign intruder – for instance the figure of the Jew – today's post-political class antagonism opposes rightist exclusion but produces the opposite form of mystification, a pragmatics of inclusion of the Other on the terms of biocapitalist integration. In the network ideology of post-politics one ignores one's position as the representation of the All but as

an inverse racism that calls for the admission of the foreigner. The Other, as Žižek argues, serves as the motivating force of the new multicultural capitalism.[56] As he mentions in *Less Than Nothing*, the official antagonism is always reflexive, supplemented by a remainder that is foreclosed, which means that "the true antagonism is not between liberal multiculturalism and fundamentalism, but between the very field of their opposition and the excluded Third (radical emancipatory politics)."[57] Žižek's view that the culture war is a class war in a displaced mode therefore has an uncanny and unexpected supplement in radical cultural theorizing. Whereas most cultural studies would want us to see the oppressed as the excluded – the immigrant, the foreigner, or the various other marginalized identities, nationalities, and so on – today's neoliberal control of populations leads to the kind of hegemony struggles that prohibit the formation of a radical political class. Instead, an anti-capitalist petty-bourgeois class of activists and non-governmental forces competes with the post-ideological class of technocratic experts and middle-class managers who are directly opposed to any genuinely radical politicization. What these have in common is their mutual aversion to the political vanguard. In contemporary biocapitalism, the excluded Real is that of the vanguard. This vanguard becomes the *objet a*, the supplement that prevents the class struggle from developing into socialist politics and which operationalizes the relation of labour and capital as post-political post-ideology. Within biocapitalism, what is rejected is not the specific figure who disturbs the harmony of the organic community, or the figure who controls capital – multi-billionaires like Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos are otherwise celebrated – but the organization of society in such a way as to bring the production of surplus under social control. Instead of the communist party or the socialist bureaucracy, or any other form of leftist organization, the neoliberal order holds to the idea of the anonymous rule of the free market.

One might further note how technocratic depoliticization is accompanied by the rise of extreme right political forces, which act as a support for the same neoliberal ideology. According to cultural theorist Sven Lütticken, what might distinguish the extreme right is its way of "exacerbating" and "exploiting" the autonomy of the socio-economic, as opposed to insisting on political economy. As he puts it:

> The current culture war consist[s] of a series of clashes between right-wing identitarianism and progressive identity politics; the latter mirrors the former in that it, too, provides means of identification beyond socioeconomic categories. It does so through a strategy of universalization-through-particularization: human rights and human dignity will finally be anchored to groups that were long regarded as less than fully human, and

> who can now emerge into broad daylight. When this results in a fetishization of cultural codes to the neglect of the economic aspects of social justice, ostensibly emancipatory action devolves into a feel-good politics that actually relies on the persistence of systemic inequality. The suffering of others becomes a vast resource for ruling-class soul-cleansing which must be preserved at all costs. Without a broader and radically inclusive emancipatory narrative – one that can no longer rely on endless economic growth to smooth the edges – 'social justice' becomes an endless obnoxious Twitter spat, an unceasing series of inane columns in liberal clickbait media arguing who is going to hell and who isn't. The autonomy of the political has become the autism of the filter bubble.[58]

Lütticken finds examples of this "autonomy of the political" in the symmetry between educated Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn supporters and uneducated Donald Trump and Brexit "Leave" voters, with the strongest supporters of anti-immigrant, right-wing and neo-fascist parties in Europe coming from the unemployed, unemployable and retired. The accuracy of the description of this constituency is debatable since, in the case of the United States at least, it is rather the middle and upper-classes that represent the real political force behind Trump. Moreover, the moral indignation of the liberal class vis-à-vis the extreme right ignores its systematic rejection of leftist politics, which endangers the conditions for a liberal polity. Regardless, Lütticken's focus is the autonomy of political ideology among the working class from actual economic self-interest.[59] Such lack of economic self-interest is translated into destructive fascist counterrevolution, which he associates with the triumph of Spirit (*Geist*) over material reality – a counterrevolutionary activism that he refers to in terms of avant-garde and anarchist aktionism.

Notwithstanding the various forms of post-humanism on the academic left, which tend to show little concern with such "liberal bourgeois" questions as human dignity and rights, and notwithstanding what is otherwise a politics of radical democratic equivalence, Žižek's argument is that the culture wars are not beyond the economic, but are means to subdue what is conflictual in a society dominated by capital. We should insist, then, that the left response to the rightist culturalization of the political should not be opposed to an equally exploitative inflation of culture wars and identity politics, but an emphasis on the links between culture, politics, labour and the economy. Nor, however, should we abandon a certain autonomization of political theory because the right does this also. For example, in light of the recent refugee crisis in Europe, Žižek proposes that what is required in the context of mutual intolerance is ethical universalism: obligatory norms that are applicable to everyone, as well

as the protection of individual freedom against group pressure. When such norms are not enough to prevent outbursts of "aktionist" intolerance, then the force of law should be applied.[60] Conflicts between cultures are conflicts over the rules of co-existence, which presuppose common concerns. A positive project, he argues, should presume the universality of struggles as part of the process of emancipation.[61] Lastly, Žižek notes how in 2015 the preoccupation with such an emancipatory project, as seen for instance with the class politics of Podemos and Syriza, was quashed by the liberal politics of tolerance and anti-terrorist solidarity after the Paris terror killings. Neoliberal tolerance and Islamo- or Euro-Fascism are two sides of the same coin, he argues. The only alternative is class struggle and the global solidarity of the exploited and oppressed.[62]

Lütticken proposes that we should abandon working-class politics but remain committed to the way that the proletariat was an inventive artifice, something he says that can also be found in the idea of the multitude. This point was previously made by Žižek, who argues something similar when he says that the refugee crisis is the price that humanity is paying for the global economy:

> The main lesson to be learned, therefore, is that humankind should get ready to live in a more 'plastic' and nomadic way: local or global changes in environment may result in the need for unheard-of large-scale social transformations and population movements. We are all more or less rooted in a particular way of life, protected by rights, but some historical contingency may all of a sudden throw us into a situation in which we are compelled to reinvent the basic coordinates of our way of life.[63]

Žižek, however, does not abandon class struggle, but redeploys it in the context of the idea of communism in its historical reality.

The Idea of the Avant Garde

The question of the relationship between a political vanguard (political praxis) and an artistic avant garde (art praxis) is particularly fraught in a world of rightist nationalism, liberal multiculturalism and leftist postmodernism. The activist tendency to dissolve art into life avoids all talk of vanguardism as representative of institutional power. Academic critical theory relies on cultural theory and identity struggles as solutions to more intractable problems. What then are the prospects for avant-gardism? In his recent theory of the avant garde, John Roberts cautions against a naive understanding of vanguard functions:

> it is important to stress that being in advance of capitalism does not mean that the avant-garde is in the *vanguard* of anti-capitalism or the vanguard of art: there are no contemporary avant-gardes (or successful ones) that seek to sublate other contemporary avant-gardes on the basis of defining or seeking a leading place in the totalizing critique of capitalism; there is only the disremptive work of negation in a given context, which may or may not provide the links to other practices and to an external political process.[64]

This non-exemplary logic of affinity coheres with Roberts' defence of the avant garde against those who would associate it with the modernist art canon, or, for that matter, with its counter-revolutionary destruction, for which the avant garde is somehow responsible. As he writes, "[t]his obsession with that which is no longer as that which can *be* no longer is a particular fetish of our epoch, and is regularly called upon by art history and cultural theory to discipline what is held to be the unobtainable and hubristic claims of art on the extra-artistic real."[65]

Against various narratives of decline, Roberts insists on the avant garde as a renewable and open anticipation. In his estimation, today's avant garde is a "loose collectivity of participants and networks" that has an advantage over avant-garde predecessors in that it is much broader and more diverse in terms of composition.[66] Its disadvantage is that it emerges in the midst of what he calls, echoing Gregory Sholette's notion of "dark matter," a "second economy" that is characterized by unemployment on a global level, which itself becomes part of radical art's praxiological materials and self-conceptualization.[67] Whereas the primary economy of art is concerned with the objects that are made for the rarefied world of museums and markets, the vast majority of semi-proletarian artists today, he says, labour within a second economy in which what is made is part of a diffuse and interconnected process of socialization that is due in part to the spread of new technologies. Although Roberts argues that access to technology and the electronic commons is not in and of itself progressive, his argument focuses on the content of what is produced on the Internet, for instance, whether it is progressive and activist or petty-bourgeois and mass cultural.[68] My argument is only slightly different insofar as I would argue that petty-bourgeois ideology affects and influences both progressive art activism as well as mass-cultural creative class entrepreneurialism. One could say, instead, as Brian Holmes does, that what is as stake today is a class struggle that is taking place largely within the class compositions of the petty bourgeoisie.[69] Although the electronic commons is under threat by corporatization and government control, where policing is designed to ensure "economic security," Roberts believes that it otherwise facilitates challenges to

the hegemony of the institutionalized art world as an electronic commons and space of participation without hierarchical sanction.[70] One simple question that we might ask of commons, as opposed to previous notions of the public sphere and public interest, is whether digital commons imply a logic of cybernetic governance that might suppress rather than enable the avant garde and communist hypotheses. This question is not only due to the control of left-wing media by tech monopolies like Google and Facebook, which expanded in 2017 as part of efforts to manage "fake news" through politically censorious computer algorithms, but can also be perceived in more fundamental terms as part of the cultural logic of the new digital media.

Assertions regarding the dialectics of ideology, social relations and forces of production – their connections and aporias – are addressed at length in *Don't Network*. Roberts' theory of the avant garde otherwise provides a useful reference for anti-anti-art in terms of what he defines as post-art and extended conceptualization. Basing his theory of the avant garde on Hegel's "end of art" notion of the conceptualization of art, Roberts argues for the kind of post-art that transcends itself through intellectual reflection, or what he terms "realized reflexivity."[71] Art that reflects on its historical, social and political conditions of possibility – what Roberts calls the supersession of autonomy – abolishes itself as art and dialectically sublates art in terms of a post-medium general social technique as "art after art in the expanded field."[72] The avant garde is an emancipatory project or social programme that cannot be limited to its conditions of emergence and consequent destruction by either twentieth-century totalitarianism or by the prevalence of the culture industry. It carries these anomalies, inconsistencies and discontinuities, but its core research programme is not determined by them. Roberts associates the programme of the avant garde with the scientific method of Imre Lakatos rather than the more postmodern work of Thomas Kuhn. He explains the notion of a core research programme in Hegelian terms as a "critique of the unobtainable Absolute within the pursuit of the Absolute" and associates its "non-identitary functions and ambitions" with the notion of autonomy as the adisciplinary ontological ground of art's conceptualization.[73] Whereas Theodor Adorno upheld autonomy as a critique of heteronomy, Roberts proposes a dialectical defence of autonomy for post-art, in particular for the sake of partisan practices, which he defines as a "metastasis" of art praxis and political praxis.[74]

If anti-anti-art or post-art is to engage with heteronomy in any significant way, it has to retain something of artistic ontology. Against crude materialism, radical art self-alienates and self-negates as a mediated form. Art cannot escape into life, but nor can life escape into art.[75] The two are not mutually exclusive, nor are they the same. Priority is therefore not given to art's conceptualization, as Roberts argues, but to conceptualization *tout court*, defining negation as part of an active praxis and critique of the state of things. Contrary to the

complaint of postmodern social constructionists, this does not imply idealization but underscores the dialectical essence of revolution. The question for the avant garde is not a matter of showing how technological and networked flows are changing the forms of art, or the distribution of the sensible, but rather to argue that such positivist materializations are part of a whole series of the appearance of "the line of least resistance."[76] What is in advance of capitalist class relations is not simply what is in front of our noses.

More Than Human

How can we give negativity to not only the thinking of art but also social reality, so that avant-garde critique can be radical social critique? As Žižek argues, in the relationship between art and life, art is a subspecies of life. The negation of the negation does not deny art, but makes use of art to advance a certain vision of life.[77] Žižek's work provides a new foundation for dialectical materialism and alongside it Badiou's conception of the mathematical ontology of subjectivity mediates the emergence of a truth procedure.[78]

From Badiou I take several key concepts, in particular his defence of universality against democratic materialism, as well as the idea that truths and truth procedures are generic. In *Being and Event*, Badiou follows a Lacanian line of thought to argue that the subject is not self-identical but infinitely multiple. Premised on set theory and the notion of the subject of language, being is neither the product of reflection nor the correlate of an object.[79] In contrast to post-structuralism, which claims that there are no stable referents, only narratives and language games, with nothing beyond the purview of the text or disciplinary power, Badiou is concerned to show that although most of the time humans are creaturely in their passivity, they sometimes also act in ways that isolate them from their context and become subjects who act in fidelity to an event that disrupts the situation they find themselves in and creates a new situation. This is not a question of exemplary individuality, but only of events in which people become subjects and move beyond the relativism of a democratic materialism in which that which simply exists prevails. Such democratic materialism includes networks, flows, concatenations, bodies, collectivities, virtualities and otherness.[80] Badiou defines dialectical materialism as the process of subjectivization through which we become subjects. The passage from being simply human to being the subject of an event involves risk, courage, invention and decision.[81] An event is not a matter of transgression or deconstruction that relies on a pre-existing norm but something that occurs without assignable causes. As such it contrasts with Deleuze's emphasis on real anonymous causes and constructive planes of composition.[82] An event cannot be planned or finessed. The course of action that opens up after its occurrence is referred to as fidelity to the event and truth procedure.

Among the possible kinds of events, Badiou's philosophy identifies four major topological realms of possibility: politics, love, art and science.[83] None of these realms can be defined in the usual terms as fields of knowledge or as discourses, but involve a comprehensive engagement of subjectivity that is not simply material. The realm of politics is discussed in many of Badiou's books but perhaps it is *The Communist Hypothesis* that best encapsulates his notion that politics has to do with identifying contradictions and what is socially unacceptable. This becomes all the more difficult in a post-political world that is based on democratic consensus and political equanimity. Under neoliberalism, politics seem to no longer exist. This is why contemporary democratic politics is devoted to identities, bodies and languages. Badiou argues that equality requires instead a universalism that is not concerned to make peace with the status quo but that is also not given to nihilistic destruction.[84] In his book on Saint Paul, he argues against the victimary definition of humanity that prevents access to the universal. There is no question then of pity for the marginal. This is replaced with the militancy of a truth, with genuine subjectivation and law as a path of faith. Anticipating Žižek's critique of tolerance, Badiou argues that devotion to the other is false love and narcissistic pretension.[85] There are certainly differences between people, but a truth procedure such as the event of communism collapses differences into a set that deploys the genericity of the true. A universal idea, he argues, produces sameness and equality. Nazism, in contrast, produces difference: the difference between life and death, the master race as absolute difference. The universal of communism therefore has its keywords: class struggle, revolution and abolition of private property. The real question for Badiou as a critic of state power and democratic politics is the form that political organization should take. Badiou thus gives value to thought:

> The world of global and arrogant capitalism in which we live is taking us back to the 1840s and the birth of capitalism. Its imperative, as formulated by Guizot, was: 'Get rich!' We can translate that as 'Live without an idea!' We have to say that we cannot live without an idea.[86]

Another example of the idea as a generic set is that of the truth procedure of art. The art event creates an idea that proposes a new possibility. Badiou's idea would thus have some affinity with Roberts' emphasis on avant-garde art's adisciplinarity and non-identity, but also some differences insofar as Badiou's idea is not a programme or a praxis that can be achieved by concrete means. It comes closer, Badiou says, to the notion of a principle, like that of equality and emancipation. In contrast to Jacques Rancière, Badiou argues that art has nothing to do with the senses, even if its effects are sensory. It

is, in Hegelian terms, the sensible form of the Idea. The question, then, in relation to Badiou's critique of democratic materialism, is the relation of the idea to the universal. Artistic events, he argues, are mutations in artistic form that relate to multiplicity and relativity.[87] He gives the word "subtraction" to describe the way that art is not merely the descent of an idea into the "finite abjection" of the body, the senses and sexuality. Subtraction is not concerned with formal novelty nor with sadistic cruelty, which is the opposite, he says, of the ideology of happiness.[88] Badiou also opposes the cultural studies approach and its critique of representation, which he says does not provide a critical position on capitalism. Real desire is the desire for something stable and closed in-itself and so constant change and the mutability of form is not significant as such.

Events in art include, for example, the atonal music of Schoenberg, dodecaphonic serial music, montage and the advent of non-figurative painting. In contrast to the orientation of the culture industry and its focus on romantic individuals, the generic set of truth in art is less concerned with the artist than it is with the artistic subject as constituted by a system of works, which alone are able to configure a new subjectivity and artistic sequence. The creator is not the focus of the event, Badiou argues: "[s]crutinizing the soul of the creator in order to discover something or other about the work has never yielded anything whatsoever."[89] Although Badiou questions the notion of avant-garde originality that we could associate with artists like Edgard Varèse or Vassily Kandinsky, and given the present situation in which there does not seem to be a new orientation, he sees contemporary art as being more connected to political proposals that break with the modernist practice of deconstructing previous experiments. Badiou states that the present politico-aesthetic situation is

> an interval situation due to the crisis of the Idea. This is flagrant in politics, where the crisis of the communist Idea is the very crisis of the political idea as such. In art, the crisis of the Idea is made manifest by the twilight of that period when art was fuelled by a radical critical methodology.[90]

The crisis of the communist hypothesis, I would argue, invokes the crisis of the avant garde hypothesis. Badiou's interest in the affirmationist possibilities of the popular cinema, however, provides one way to refigure Roberts' notion of the relationship between art ontology and heteronomy. For Badiou, the indiscernability between art and non-art in cinema makes it a social and political art par excellence, and, he adds, makes it more kitschy than avant-gardist.[91] Film thinks and produces truth, he says, a feature of its creative potential that need not be reduced to negation, but that is rather the affirmative part of a

negation of the common laws of objectivity.[92] This affirmative aspect of negation, then, we could associate with the first, retroactive instance of the anti in anti-anti-art.

Less Than Network

Like Badiou, Žižek also provides us with a definition of dialectical materialism that draws on Hegel as well as psychoanalysis. In *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek is concerned with the reality of art-as-fiction, which relates to the question of the inconsistency of the place of enunciation and its difference from the content of the enunciation, understood in Lacano-Hegelian terms as the lack in the Other and our inability to fully know the truth.[93] While this would seem to concede too much to postmodern nihilism and relativism, Žižek argues that, on the contrary, ontological failure represents the radical implication of Hegel in comparison with the anti-totality themes of contingency, difference and alterity. He proposes instead a post-metaphysical project that is faithful to Badiou's project of radical emancipation. As he puts it,

> This, then, is our basic philosophico-political choice (decision) today; either repeat in a materialist vein Plato's assertion of the meta-physical dimension of 'eternal Ideas,' or continue to dwell in the postmodern universe of 'democratic materialist' historicist relativism, caught in the vicious cycle of the eternal struggle with 'premodern' fundamentalisms.[94]

The problem with what we know to be untrue or what under democratic materialism is the reign of the value form is the fact that something that is known to be an illusion, or ideological, remains symbolically effective, even if it is known to be illusory. Speaking of the universality that sustains artistic production, he writes:

> Schoenberg still hoped that somewhere there would be at least one listener who would truly understand his atonal music. It was his greatest pupil, Anton Webern, who accepted the fact that there is no listener, no big Other to receive the work and properly recognize its value.[95]

The issue is less that Schoenberg's work did not influence modern music, but that the lack of the big Other implies that any radical aesthetic and political undertaking is always in a state of suspension with regard to its universality. If there is therefore an Idea of communism, or of the avant garde, the reality of this idea is always incomplete and a matter of appearances – in Hegelian terms a pure negativity.

For Žižek, the domain of art is, like everything else, the realm of the Lacanian *objet petit a*, a counterpoint to the Idea. For Lacan, the idea appears as a supra-sensible illusion, which means that to understand art is to prioritize appearance over reality, to reach the not-All as the gap between illusion and reality. This is why politics is always partisan, since there can be no neutral or unmediated view of reality: "There *is a truth*, and not everything is relative – but this truth is the truth of the perspectival distortion *as such*, not a truth distorted by the partial view of a one-sided perspective."[96] Subjectivity, the subjectivity of political emancipation and struggle, stands in for and grounds the universal. In this sense Žižek concurs with Badiou that there are no objective criteria for an event. Against those who associate Hegel with synthesis, Žižek counters that the Hegelian notion of totality should be read as a Lacanian non-All.

Subjectivization gives consistency to social structure. Avant-garde negation would thus seem to be a tragic choice, as Žižek puts it, directed at the God-Father of neoliberalism.[97] The stakes are fully social and symbolize a demand for change for which a radical collectivity is willing to support the lack in the big Other as "protectors of appearances." In a perfectly succinct description of what Mark Fisher calls capitalist realism, Žižek says that everyone today proclaims that the emperor is naked – i.e. capitalism is a failed system – and yet the system continues to function as if the emperor was clothed.[98] In this scenario, subjects impersonate the big Other as an anonymous field of rules and rituals. The question then is how does the subject experience life under post-Fordist biocapitalism? Do subjects recognize themselves in network culture or in network ideology? Do they merely feign to do so, like Anderson's loyal and now cynical subjects? We are here back to the triad of idiot, moron and imbecile, or as Žižek adds, to that of hysterics who find networks and networking unbearable, to psychotics who wallow in it, or to perverts who serve as instruments of the network but who themselves do not necessarily enjoy.[99]

What then of the avant garde after networks? The avant garde organizes the end of networking as an anonymous biocapitalist field. The end of the network, to read in between Žižek's lines, is the negation of the negation – not a guarantee that our projects are a historical inevitability, not ideological illusion, but the capacity to think the network as *objet a*; that is, a net that is full of holes, inconsistent, with gaps, and that is virtual insofar as it is merely a pre-supposition. Can one get rid of networks? The question seems redundant insofar as the subject and *objet a* are already, inherently incompatible. In his writing on the sinthome, interpreted as an identification with the symptom, Lacan suggests that we can get rid of the "net-symptom" on condition that we make use of it and its illusory reality.[100] It this sense it is not enough to say that networks are socially produced and thereby reduce them to heteronomy. Networks are simply another form of repression, a lack in the symbolic order.

Through networks the network society articulates itself as unconscious. To disturb this order is to appear as negativity. For Badiou this means to emerge as a subject, and for Žižek it means to emerge as the subject of drive. For Žižek there is no inherent difference between the Freudian and Lacanian notion of drive. What results from negativity is a universality that is always attached to some contingent "pathological" content as its sinthome.[101] Networks thus emerge as the symptoms of biocapitalist relationality in the age of the rise to hegemony of the global petty-bourgeois mode of appropriation.

The lesson of the avant garde after networks is the inessential existence of the network as a feature of the global mode of production and social relations, regardless of its institutional necessity in both the creative industries and in activist political organization. This is not merely a matter of deprivation but a condition for new possibilities of engagement. We should nevertheless approach with some skepticism those theories that presume that the actually existing social and technological conditions of capitalism contain the positive conditions for a revolutionary society. For Žižek, the economic mode of production has no ontological priority over ideology.[102] This irreducibility is what he understands by the term immanentism, which I use instead to characterize the tendency to reductionism and determinism. The inconsistency of reality implies that we can choose to think and act outside the dominant social parameters. Whereas avant-garde art makes use of new social techniques, or new modes of creative interaction like relational aesthetics, community art and participatory art, it can also choose non-interactive approaches. Avant-garde art is unlike contemporary art in the sense that, in its self-determination, it has only itself to negate in its becoming for-itself. This is the difference, Žižek says, between Marxist anti-capitalism and a conservative anti-capitalism that sacrifices freedom and equality in order to establish an organic community.[103]

Against postmodernist mystification, it is important to appreciate that dialectics is not a synthesis of subject and object, mind and body, but a process of transformation in which the subject includes itself. The subject does not unite with the other in the form of its alienated substance – the body, the network, the mode of production, the political party – since there is no subjective substance that can be appropriated. In negation of the negation, in anti-anti-avant-garde-art, subject has no essence.[104] The realized reflexivity that Roberts associates with post-art would be defined by Žižek as the "absolute recoil" that generates through negation that which it negates, as for instance the practice of Situationist détournement. Networks thus appear to us today as a point of negation. The negation of the negation opens up the process of realized reflexivity for which the network is a lost desire. Drive, the absolute reflection, means that whatever the particularities of our praxis we will have disposed ourselves to a separation from networks. This does not imply, however, a return to the state before the advent of networks. A new subject is created, which is the

outcome of a loss: the failure of the subject to express itself as or embody the substance of networks. As Žižek puts it: "The only full case of absolute recoil, of a thing emerging through its very loss, is thus that of the subject itself, as the outcome of its own impossibility."[105] However, so is the network society transformed as it is now reflexively redoubled by its alienation from itself. After the avant garde, the *network* appears, in Žižek's words, as "the object that redoubles lack, not simply the lacking object … but the object that redoubles the lack and is thus a paradoxical something subtracted from nothing."[106]

In a network society, the network as *objet a* is the object that overlaps with its loss, an object-cause of desire that becomes its own drive, from lost object to loss itself as an object. This attests to networks as the object of our fixation and stuckness. Although we do not seem with this to shift from substance to subject, but from subject to object, what we have with *objet a* is epistemological-ontological mediation. Ontological failure, the inability to know the Thing, the failure of discourse and symbolization, points to our inclusion within the network. This takes us beyond any understanding of technology as inherently utopian, or of a particular method of production as inherently capitalist. We can never arrive at any conclusion due to our inclusion within reality.[107]

The idea of a network functions perfectly as *objet a* since it appears to encompass everything, giving consistency to the flow of data, images and signs. Networks appear as form rather than content, giving order to the confused desiderata of capitalist overproduction. Networks thus compete with the potential impact of an avant garde of collectivized leftist groups. They operate both an ordering and a disordering, a lack and at the same time something that pretends to fill this lack. To become aware of the limits of networks is therefore an effort to locate the moment of excess in the material reality of digital technology. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker argue that any understanding of networks as technical systems implies a willingness to theorize at a technical level, to carry theory to a protocological level and therefore to write code as well as oppositional counterprotological code.[108] The problem with such a theory, however, is the belief that subject can directly coincide with empire and code.[109] For Žižek, in contrast, capitalism names the Real of an antagonism that is inherent to capital itself, its constant need for self-overcoming.

Returning to Badiou, Žižek argues that his theory of worlds does not account for how the truth events of art reach into the truth events of politics, for instance. If avant-garde anti-anti-art is in networks more than networks, or vice versa, then the conceptualization of the avant garde changes along with it. This is evident enough in the familiar differences between what we typically understand as autonomous avant-garde art and networked activist art. Whereas the latter is alienated by capitalist reality, the former registers the alienation of capitalism as the not-All of reality. The avant garde hypothesis registers the inconsistent multiplicity of reality as fidelity to truth. As such this

hypothesis would for Žižek be on the side of Freudian drive and self-division, which destabilizes in advance Badiou's idea of the merely human. This is why events are typically missed when they first occur, since they relate to the virtuality of the symbolic order.

It took several decades after the Second World War to realize, but also to domesticate, what the historical avant gardes had accomplished. It will likely take just as much time before we can say for certain how radical art has or will inscribe the lack of the network society. This is in no small part due to our quantum knowing, our active involvement in the avant garde hypothesis. There is no objective content to such knowing but only a process of questioning and retrospection. As part of this questioning I begin this book with a preliminary investigation of the network enterprise, network society and network culture. The Italian autonomist theory of the social factory is addressed as a key reference for activist art in the context of what Marx described as the real subsumption of labour. The links between networks and capitalism will thus be identified and challenged. I then turn to Henri Lefebvre's 1967 critique of Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, a book that anticipates by several decades the critique of Foucault's theories of biopower and neoliberal governance. The chapter is concerned to imagine alternatives to those contemporary critiques of the network society that are dependent on discourse theory for an effective analysis of the ideology of neoliberal technocracy. The critique of biopower allows us to also bring into view in chapter three some of the limitations of art histories of the avant garde that turn to networks as a new methodology that would more effectively replace leftist dialectics and better complement post-structural social constructionism. Turning then to the contemporary context in chapters four and five, networks are shown to affect both the thinking of sociality and networked political organization, a contradiction that is given its full weight in chapter six, which discusses the prospects of politicized activist art around Occupy Wall Street as a contemporary instance of the avant-garde sublation of art into life. In the last two chapters I move away from networked bioactivism and examine two examples of not networking: the English band The Fall and the role of group leader Mark E. Smith are explored as an instance of a non-networked Discourse of the Master, and Guy Debord and Alice Becker-Ho's Game of War is assessed through the events of the post-Situationist collective Class Wargames as an atemporal Analyst model of communist transference and in relation to Richard Barbrook's theory of cybernetic communism.

A 2016 episode of the Netflix sci-fi drama *Black Mirror* depicts a future society in which people rate and control one another through the continuous feedback of point scores. Image © Netflix.

ONE

ON NETWORKS AND VULGARITY

I fear the day when technology overlaps with humanity.
The world will only have a generation of idiots.
– Albert Einstein

The Internet spawned Uber and Amazon, not the
Paris Commune. The results may be called the
"sharing economy," but this mostly means that
the poor share with the rich, not vice versa.
– Hito Steyerl

The crisis on the left in neoliberal times leads to various kinds of solutions, most of them defined in terms of new social movements and opposed to internationalist communism in one way or another – either to its orthodox emphasis on labour politics or to its occupation of state power. The new left that has rejected state socialism, however, has never fully detached itself from the legacy of leftist radicalism. Because of the lasting influence of Marxism, in particular, one of the most popular currents of leftist thought among today's new social movements is Italian autonomism. The concept of network, network society or network ideology gains a particular strength and theoretical validity when it is conceived in light of the autonomist focus on forces of production and new social compositions. It is Italian *autonomia*, it would seem, that provides the richest critical and intellectual grounding for a leftist conception of networks. The autonomist line prevents the critique of networks from reducing the concept to a strawman or to something that

can be rejected simply by virtue of its incorporation in neoliberal capitalism. Autonomist theory gives the nebulous character of the concept of networks a theoretical grounding within leftist thought. Italian autonomism, however, is not alone in the discussion on networks and so we can gauge its merits by subsequently comparing its insights to those of libertarians and then to more critical approaches. While networks can be appreciated for their intrinsic or formal characteristics they are better understood in relation to their broader social functions. I make this dubious distinction between form and context for mostly heuristic purposes. It may be that those thinkers who are oriented towards cyber-utopianism and technological euphoria are more likely to give a favourable, technicist, account of networks, while sociologists and critical theorists perceive networks from a more distanced or contingent perspective. What is certain, however, is that even the most critical approaches have a determinist tendency. In the best of Marxist traditions, such determinism will not be discounted, though my wager in this book is that radical practice requires that we think beyond it.

Network as Ontology

One of the simplest ways to understand networks is to presume that we have society and human nature on one side, and networks, technology or machines on the other. The next inevitable step is to either connect or collapse the two, most likely in a historicized account of the development of machines or through some kind of miraculous interfacing. In what way can one speak of networks as a contingency that now appears to us as a necessity? Žižek's work asks us to think of our predestined place in network society as a kind of traumatic irruption that in some measure obliges us to refuse symbolic identification. He writes,

> [I]f God has decided in advance who will be saved and who will be damned, then my salvation or perdition do not depend on my determinate qualities and acts but on the place in which – independently of my qualities, that is to say: totally by chance, in so far as I'm concerned – I find myself within the network of God's plan.[1]

The question then is whether and how we recognize ourselves as network beings. Regardless of whether we accept this fate as passive victims, as a simple recognition of inevitability, or in full complicit identification, we can speak of a network society and a networked subjectivity, as though the ontology of being has meshed with networks just as nicely as a Robert Smithson site/non-site installation or in Donna Haraway's theory of the cyborg. Geert Lovink takes

this approach to network cultures and network theory, proposing a productive relation between society and technology. Networks, he says, override the binary opposition of life and virtuality:

> Networks integrate sociality with software, interfaces, and routers. The term 'network' has a specific ambiguity, as it at once talks bout the social as well as the machinic. The social structure formed by the technological infrastructure is of interest here because there is no longer any 'pure internet technology' without massive swarms of users.[2]

Siting networks at the centre of his research, Lovink suggests that network culture displaces academia as we know it, along with institutions like broadcast media and traditional art scenes. The fact that networks are everywhere causes so much panic that we can now speak of network culture as a new condition, somewhat along the lines of the former postmodernism. But does this help to explain anything, since, as Lovink says, "[t]he name [network] is a good example of a hybrid concept that is both a strange attractor and empty signifier."[3]

Network culture is thus a second-order term and social assemblage created through the simple exposure to technology wherein social subjects as well as fields of knowledge lose their previous parameters. There is a certain circularity involved in this way of thinking, however, insofar as networks are used to understand the effects of networks, the way they bring everything into their realm, from communication, art and design, to activism and politics. To take a progressive stance on this process, Lovink proposes that network culture should be accompanied by net criticism, as opposed to positivist description, in order to diagnose aesthetic and political changes and so that we can master the real-time flows of user-driven communications. Žižek's point, in contrast, is that such measures reflect the paradox of desire. Although we cannot escape such compromise formations as networks, we cannot reconcile ourselves to them either.

The collapse or constructive montage of ontology with heteronomy can lead to immediate problems when it comes to left praxis. With regard to commons, the cultural theorist Joost de Bloois recently proposed the idea of an "ontologized commons," a concept that can allow us to shed some light on the presuppositions of an "ontologized network" in such notions as network society or network culture. Although there are differences between the idea of a commons and that of a network, Bloois's critique is a helpful rejoinder to the simplification of hybridization. In his essay, "The Ontologized Commons," Bloois notes the tendency to ontologize the political concept of the commons through a grounding in being, which then safeguards the new matrix of life, now defined as being-in-common, commoning or sharing economy.[4] The

ontologization of a political concept goes too far, he argues, when it "compensate[s] for the absence of effective political practice."[5] Bloois therefore understands commons as a compensatory mechanism for the fact that today's left has abandoned the emancipatory politics of political modernity. For him, commons work as a parasitic shadow economy within neoliberal hegemony, replacing universal education, healthcare and welfare with autonomous living and other self-directed processes. Commons depend on existing socio-economic inequalities and avoid building the kinds of institutions that could confront them. Referring to the autonomist practices that are popular in today's art world, Bloois concludes that commons are asymmetrical to neoliberal capitalist hegemony. His short broadside allows us to envisage how an "ontologized network" can become something that mystifies leftist critique, capitulating to an ideology of networks that serves neoliberal capitalism rather than strengthening more vital political possibilities.

Labour, Immanence, Autonomy

The litmus test for a networked politics is perhaps best represented by the work of Italian Marxists associated with *autonomia* and the theories they developed around the concept of the social factory and around Marx's notion of the real subsumption of labour. Emerging in Italy in the 1960s as *operaismo* (workerism) and developing in the 1970s into *autonomia* (autonomy), Italian autonomist Marxism represents a significant theoretical challenge to the commonplaces of cultural studies, in part due to its critique of Gramscian notions of hegemony and due to its focus on capitalized production. The essence of *operaismo*, according to Nicholas Thoburn, is its focus on new modes of production in the postwar period and its view that the combination of technical forces with the socius has created an impasse for autonomous self-definition.[6]

Breaking with Italian socialist and communist parties in the 1970s, *autonomia* has been central to the rise of new social movements and struggles for inclusion. Despite this, *autonomia* revolves around longstanding "orthodox" concepts such as the distinction between mode of production (the forces of production that incorporate new technologies), social relations of production and ideological superstructures. Its main tendency, on the whole, is to reject the dialectical relation between base and superstructure in favour of an immanentist focus on political economy as the determining aspect of new social and class compositions. Far from being a unified movement, *autonomia* represents a heterogeneous corpus of thinkers, journals and organizations, active mostly from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, and dedicated to defining the new forms of resistance and struggle that are appropriate to post-Fordist capitalism.

The basic premises of autonomist Marxism are derived from a chapter in Karl Marx's 1858 *Grundrisse*, known as the "Fragment on Machines," as well as

from the "missing sixth chapter" of *Capital* and from volumes two and three of *Capital*. Despairing of Italian communism and of social democracy's historical compromise with capitalism, *autonomia* returned to Marx and in particular to the missing chapter on "real subsumtion." According to Marxist theory, the "formal subsumption" of labour occurs when labour power is exchanged for wages and is exploited for surplus value profit. In the industrial mode of production, labour exploitation is "formal" since the labour process has not yet been completely transformed by machines and so surplus value depends on the ability of the capitalist to extend the working day, reduce workers' wages and increase the speed of work. In this context, labour is provided only enough resources to reproduce itself. The capitalist seeks to lessen the contradiction between labour and capital by revolutionizing the processes of production, which contributes to surplus value but without requiring more labour. This process of technological automation, overseen and enhanced by management techniques, leads to the "real subsumption" of labour. While this process revolutionizes what can be expected from one worker in a day, it reduces the amount of "variable capital" that is spent on workers' wages and consequently reduces the amount of capital that can be transformed into surplus. The source of value according to this "labour theory of value" model of capitalist economics is therefore human labour, or the living labour that Marx defined as "socially necessary labour time."

As competition and automation reduce the valorization process, rates of profit decline and more of the labour force is made redundant. On the one hand, beyond the money nexus, this freeing up of time is the realization of human dreams of emancipation from toil and drudgery, but on the other hand, the pauperization of the labour market creates a crisis in production since there is also a reduced ability to consume what is produced. In order to compensate for this situation in which labour has been replaced by innovation, capitalism looks to the growth of the tertiary sector, with new services made available in education, culture, leisure, advertising, health, administration, social welfare, security, and so on – a new "post-industrial" labour market that satisfies new needs and defines workers in terms of consumer identities rather than their place in the division of labour. In the most recent phase of the real subsumption of labour, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism places a great deal of emphasis on the new computer technologies and digital information that have contributed to the "financialization" of the economy, a further shift away from profits based on the industrial mode of production.[7]

The theory of the real subsumption of labour raises the question of an "ontologized network," which can be referred to in autonomist terms as the social factory. Can social relations be said to be subsumed by the technologies and mode of production through which people interact? Marx's method was partly based on a focus on the historical development of the forces of production,

which for him are fundamental to social relations and to the development of ideologies that derive from those relations. The shift from formal to real subsumption is therefore conditioned by the development of machines, which destroy the individual's artisanal way of working and incorporate "cooperative" humanity as a whole into complex machines. In the capitalist mode of production, the worker's skill-based autonomy is replaced by management and planning, which consolidates the centrality of machine automation in large-scale industry. Under real subsumption, all work is organized according to the needs and rhythms of capital, which come to define social relations.

A key figure of *autonomia* is Raniero Panzieri. In a 1967 essay titled "Surplus Value and Planning," Panzieri criticized the way that orthodox Marxists since Lenin had sought to harness the forces of production to the needs of a socialist society. Panzieri questioned the extent to which social relations of production are autonomous from the mode of production in which they are enmeshed. He criticized the "objectivist" view according to which science, technology and forces of production are regarded as neutral and distinct from relations of production. Because the technological rationality of new modes of production is designed to extract surplus value, Panzieri considered that capitalist relations are immanent to the forces of production. In this sense, Soviet state planning remained inherently capitalist since "the relations of production are within the productive forces, and these have been 'moulded' by capital."[8]

Recalling the Soviet debates over bourgeois and proletarian science, Panzieri's class reductionism could easily be seen to be a kind of vulgar, non-dialectical Lyssenkoism or Zhdanovism according to which certain new technologies should be rejected for their association with capitalist class relations. Regardless, it paved the way for further work on the autonomist theory of the social factory, which emphasizes the fact that capitalist relations are immanent to the development of machines, and with this the fact that new social formations emerge as a result of capitalist regimes of production. The concept of the social factory is attributed to autonomist theorist Mario Tronti, who wrote in 1962:

> The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-exchange-consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationships between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between the factory and society, between society and the state, become more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as

> a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society.[9]

These ideas were directly derived from Marx's *Grundrisse*, which states:

> The production process has ceased to be a labour process in the sense of a process dominated by labour as its governing unity. Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism.[10]

Based on Marx's view that the socialization of capital relates to the "total social capital," Panzieri and Tronti explored the way that capitalism is not concerned with particular units of labour, or even with individual capitals, but with the reproduction of capitalist relations of production as a whole. Marx argued that the socialization of capital, which he defined as "capitalist communism," implied the eventual abolition of property as a contradiction that is central to the capitalist mode of production. According to autonomist immanentism, then, leftist politics cannot be conceived independently of capitalist social relations. Within the social factory, however, labour solidarity and the cooperation among labour powers is conditioned by the needs of capital accumulation. In contrast to traditional working-class solidarity, *autonomia* proposed the concept of the "mass worker" – the "socialized worker" who inhabits the social factory, which extends from factory workers to countercultures and the unemployed to immigrant and domestic workers.

Thoburn argues that Marx's "Fragment on Machines" has different interpretations that are based on different passages. One of these suggests that wealth comes to depend less on labour time than on the state of scientific and technological development. The other is a countervailing point, which argues that despite the reduction of individual human labour, the more generalized social productive power is equally appropriated by capital. Wealth is thus premised on the "social individual" as the basis of an increasingly mechanical mode of production. The individual worker is gradually replaced by what Marx refers to as "general intellect," the accumulation of knowledge and skills as part of the general productive forces, and which is appropriated as an attribute of capital. As Thoburn puts it, general intellect emerges as work and as a force that is immanent to a social machinic system.[11] Although all of labour is now subsumed by capital, the development of machines results in the reduction of work and

the increase in free time, giving humans a new function as the "watchman" or manager of the labour process. This is perhaps even more noticeable in the expansion within late capitalism of the service economy and of what is otherwise defined by Marx as unproductive labour.

In a network culture, the commodities and services that are produced are all the more ephemeral and immaterial, merging more radically with everyday life and leading to an even greater confusion regarding the locus of the social. As the work of Susan Buck-Morss on Walter Benjamin's study of nineteenth-century anaesthetics demonstrates, the conditions of late modernity impoverish everyday life, leading people to respond to new processes without thinking: "[t]he technologically altered environment exposes the human sensorium to physical shocks that have their correspondence in psychic shock."[12] In relation to the modern world, mimesis becomes a defensive reflex against psychosis. Benjamin mentions in this regard Marx's analysis of the factory, where workers learn to coordinate their movement to the repetitive motion of machines. The effect on sensibilities is brutalizing, she says. Rather than being open to one's environment though the senses, mimetic capacities are transformed into a kind of anaesthetic "innervation," a false sense of empowerment that is designed to deflect the outside world, warding off sensations to prevent nervous breakdown. Following Buck-Morss, we can appreciate that the new forms of exploitation in the social factory are also confusedly mimetic, rather than memetic, which implies self-replicating evolution beyond human consciousness.[13] Having reduced labour time, capitalism has turned to new forms of domination and control, linking all aspects of life, identity, culture and leisure to GDP calculations and uncoupling them from notions of emancipation and freedom. We should therefore resist glib descriptions of the general intellect as a form of social organization that is free from conditions of exploitation.

The upshot of the concept of the social factory is that contemporary capitalism has no use for the individual worker. It is easy enough to see how the post-Fordist machine is causing people to turn to commons, collectivism, identity groups and even gangsterism as ways to gain value within a system that programmatically undermines the worth of individual labour powers. This phenomenon is a crucial contradiction in the work of Antonio Negri, who argues that the socialized "mass worker" increasingly produces communicational and affective "immaterial" labour. The postwar recomposition of capital away from factory production and towards consumerism and advertising accompanied the rise of new class compositions, from lumpen youth subcultures, women and sexual minorities, to non-communist workers, the unemployed and part-time flex workers. The means to control and harness the productivity of this new composition of social labour-power was through communication and knowledge. In their 2000 text, *Empire*, Negri and Michael Hardt draw on Michel Foucault's work to describe communicative labour as a subjective

and affective "biopolitics" that is immanent to capitalist regimes of production, now designed as code, sign and information.[14] Labour is informationalized through communicative flows that are mediated by technologies and enmeshed in regimes of control. Capitalism is thus programmed directly into the brains and bodies of cooperating subjects.

The critical issue surrounding Negri's theory of immaterialism is the extent to which labour is able to become "autonomous" of capitalist relations. Is it possible for the new labour regimes to create a "capitalist communism" that would reiterate Marx's insights at a later stage of development that he could not foresee. Negri ignores the psychopathologies of everyday life and argues instead that communicative flows have the potential to escape control. On the one hand, the machine is inherent to the functioning of the social brain, but on the other, the relations of production can once again be presumed to be separable from the forces of production. After the development of automation, capitalism makes the surplus labour that it has rendered redundant more productive through the cooperative powers of communication. The communist essence of this socialized immaterial labour is what Negri refers to as multitude. Social needs become central to capitalist reproduction, tending towards autonomous self-organization. Whereas Panzieri and Tronti proposed that there could be no autonomy of social relations from the mode of production, Negri maintains the immanentist line only to reimagine it as a kind of horizontalist Leninism, which he associates with the council communist tradition of self-management. Work refusal is less necessary in these circumstances since work has been effectively abolished. And there is no need for political ideology since the mode of production itself determines the new conditions of freedom though the collective embodiment of immaterial labour.

Further work on the multitudes and on the social factory has drawn on the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Deleuze's "Postscript on Control Societies," which appeared in French in 1990, takes up the notion of the real subsumption of labour to suggest a movement away from the disciplinary enclosures that Foucault associated with the family, the school, the factory and the army, towards a cybernetic sociality in which constant deterritorialization replaces individuals and masses with networked flows that circulate in capitalism's productive mechanisms.[15] The social factory is now harnessed to the new computer systems and to neoliberal governance. In contrast to Negri's distinction between potentially autonomous social relations and forces of production, Deleuze and Guattari consider the socius to be fully machinic, a body without organs that is composed of connective, disjunctive and conjunctive parts that flow independently and that perform distributed functions within abstract machines that perpetually decode and deterritorialize various configurations.[16] This deterritorialization is followed by reterritorialization, both of which maximize surplus beyond human needs and social necessity. Identities

are deconstructed and repackaged as part of the total process. The result is what Deleuze refers to as the "dividual," a subject who is broken down by discipline into changing capacities and contoured by the continuous feedback of information. Likewise, Guattari reads general intellect in terms of capitalist productivity, beyond work time, and channeled into desire, aesthetics and social ecologies. There is therefore no real autonomy since everything is recuperated by capitalism, which depends on innovation and variation. Autonomous zones and lines of flight can enrich but cannot challenge capitalism.

Thoburn gives the last word on the social factory idea to the autonomist thinker Maurizio Lazzarato, who considers how marketing, culture, fashion and consumer feedback obliges individual subjects to communicate and cooperate. Lifestyle self-fashioning, continuous re-education and identity politics become the concern of everyone, from the sweatshop worker to the educated cognitariat and the ad executive. Every aspect of subjectivity becomes subsumed and immanent to the machinic enslavement and hyperexploitation of feedback mechanisms described by Deleuze and Guattari. Such communication, Lazzarato says, "exists in the form of networks and flows" that are geared towards optimal fluidity.[17]

A Node in the Network of the Social Machine

The advantage of thinking about network culture as an ontological placeholder is that it allows us to describe networks in relation to both the specificity of its technological infrastructures and the vastness of heteronomy, a limitless task for the researcher and a positivist objectivity that gives immanentism a seemingly greater materialist accuracy as knowledge concerning social determinations. The disadvantage is the fact that it grounds itself so thoroughly in so-called concrete reality that it returns us to a pre-transcendental metaphysics, as noticed in the popularity among autonomists and Deleuzians of the figures of Spinoza and Leibniz, accompanied by the usual antipathy towards Descartes. Although not necessarily Marxist, most writing on networks could be said to complement the immanentist approach rather than detract from it, providing greater descriptive detail to the empirical reality of the social factory than adding anything new or valuable to theory and critque. At worst, such writing functions as an alibi for actually existing capitalism.

In order to address network theory more directly, nevertheless, it is necessary to move away from autonomism to a certain extent. To begin, one can take a contextual view of networks. Darin Barney's 2004 text, *The Network Society*, provides a useful account, relying in part on the work of Manuel Castells, who is perhaps the Ur-theorist of the network society. *The Network Society* summarizes the insights of Castells' three volumes on the subject: *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), *The Power of Identity* (1997) and *End of the*

Millenium (1998).[18] Known as *The Information Age*, Castell's trilogy argues that in a world that produces information as a new kind of commodity, social processes tend to be organized as networks and according to a network logic. The main insights that Barney draws from Castells are the following: the network society is premised on an informational economy rather than a strictly industrial economy; the economy of the network society is organized globally; human experience is displaced from the local into the time and space of networked flows; power becomes a function of access to networks and control over flows; and the source of conflict in a network society is the contradiction between the placeless character of the network and the rootedness of human meaning.[19] The latter is as true for individual subjects as it is for the forms of political association. Despite the attraction of network culture, social formations are not networks and human subjects are not nodes.

The specific characteristic of a network is that it is defined by nodes that are related by connections or ties along which flows produce a latticed web or matrix. Nodes can be people, groups, places, organizations, computer terminals and so on. They can be weak or powerful, temporary or permanent, stationary or mobile, similar or different; ties can likewise be weak or strong, public or private, sparse or dense, inclusive or exclusive, unique or intersecting. Flows can be copious or minimal, constant or intermittent, unidirectional or multidirectional. The ensuing networks have many characteristics, from centralized and decentralized to distributed, hierarchical, delimited, boundless, accessible, exclusive, defined, fuzzy, intensive or interactive.[20] This nuts and bolts version of a network can be supplemented by the insights of cybernetic theory. As Steven Shaviro describes it,

> a network is a self-generating, self-organizing, self-sustaining system. It works through multiple feedback loops. These loops allow the system to monitor and modulate its own performance continually and thereby maintain a state of homeostatic equilibrium. At the same time, these feedback loops induce effects of interference, amplification, and resonance. And such effects permit the system to grow, both in size and in complexity. Beyond this, a network is always nested in a hierarchy. From the inside it seems to be entirely self-contained, but from the outside, it turns out to be part of a still larger network.[21]

Based on the concept of self-organizing systems and the fractal principle, networks can be shown to be non-linear, non-closed, unstable and dynamic in their fluctuating processes of self-organization.[22]

Taking a broad sociological view, Barney associates the advent of the network society with five main clusters of analysis: post-industrialism, information

society, post-Fordism, postmodernism and globalization. A *post-industrial society* is one in which the mode of production shifts towards service provision as the main activity and economic source of surplus value. Rather than exploit only labour, a post-industrial society exploits information, knowledge, finance, leisure, education and even government. Control of these services leads to the creation of a technocratic class of managers and scientists who operate within a global economy and who are "immune" to ideology. The paradox of a post-industrial society, according to Barney, is that it does not lead to less alienation since it subjects human existence to a greater degree of domination that is masked as *technique*.[23] Post-industrialism, he argues, is an ideology and not an economic reality since it represents only a small difference from the industrial society with which it overlaps. An *information society* has come into existence as the result of a confluence of factors, including the economic recessions of the 1970s and the application of microcomputers to knowledge and information. The growing interconnection among computers and the standardization of networks leads to a greater integration of the social nervous system. Although an information society has not distributed political power towards greater equality, many see its effects as a positive shift away from manufacturing toil.

The question of political power leads to an understanding of *post-Fordism* as part of the capitalist mode of production. State regulation becomes essential to the production of goods and services, subsidizing innovative research and technological infrastructure. Post-Fordism emerged in the 1960s and 70s as a response to market saturation, leading to a quest for foreign markets. Labour unrest and strikes led to the offshoring of production, which accompanied the rise of unemployment and inflation, leading then to the dismantling of Keynesian welfare provision and wealth distribution. Barney identifies three features of the consequent post-Fordist flexibilization of labour: a new mode of production in which just-in-time economies of scale and surface marketing replace standardized mass production, accompanied by "Toyotist" decentralization of decision-making and participatory management; a shift away from full employment towards non-standard contract, part-time and freelance work, supplemented with lifelong learning; and a greater role for the state in creating the conditions for flexibility, innovation and competition. The neoliberalization of state authority accompanies the privatization of state companies, market deregulation and free trade. *Postmodernism* appears in this context as a challenge to the political project of enlightenment, with its faith in notions of truth and progress. Human discourse is understood as the operation of institutions and power rather than transcendent forms of knowledge. Language is conceived as a constructive function rather than a reflective medium, revealing the contingency of social meaning and leading to the destabilization of meta-narratives.

Lastly, *globalization* emerges in the 1980s as part of the deterritorialization of the sovereignty of the nation state by international and transnational trade

regimes. The accelerated flow of people, commodities and technologies across national borders reduces labour costs and increases global trade and foreign investment. The greater financialization of the economy was facilitated by the collapse in 1971 of the Bretton Woods agreement on a fixed exchange-rate system and the gold standard. The growth of global trade and financial transactions is accompanied by the hegemony of supranational institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the G8 and G20, and regional trade agreements like NAFTA, APEC, ASEAN and Mercosur. These international agreements adversely affect the ability of nation states to manage their economies and public policy, leading to a crisis of democratic accountability. IMF loans and structural adjustment policies lead to austerity regimes that bankrupt domestic economies and line the pockets of the global plutocracy. Citizenship and political autonomy is exchanged for admission to global trade networks, whose annual summits are the scene of mass demonstrations. The deterritorialization of the nation state also affects culture and identity as media technologies and global migration create conditions for a global network of communication that leads to a contradictory diversification within a homogenization of meaningful cultural differences.

For Barney, the network society reflects a range of phenomena that are mediated by the digital technologies of networked communication and by the institutionalization of networks as, today, "the basic form of human organization and relationship."[24] Operating across social, cultural, political and economic fields, networks depends on existing conditions and contexts but also create new organizational possibilities. One would add that they create new organizational demands and expectations as network relations come to encompass all of sociality, from family ties and friendship networks to the forms of political association. Although network technology has become essential to the oppositional practices of new transnational social movements, Barney argues that the political uses of technologies are minimal compared to their far more predominant uses in terms of e-mail, education, business and leisure. Activist use of the Internet accounts for less than one percent of total use, which for Barney serves to suggest that information networks reinforce dominant patterns of political engagement.[25] Moreover, because the advent of new technologies does not automatically lead to new politics, but rather tends to reinforce the undemocratic tendencies of contemporary mainstream politics, Barney warns against overuse of the network model for thinking about politics. Business culture, according to Castells, escapes from social questions, thrives on technology and the worship of money, and hides its social autism behind technological prowess.[26] Despite the wishful thinking that the social factory will lead to commons, collectivism and networked sociality, the customization of networks can also undermine common cultural experiences and meanings, emphasizing individual choices and

preferences, and therefore combining, as mentioned above, diversification with a paradoxical homogenization due to the logic of capitalist circulation.

The cybernetic logic of networks has therefore to be understood in connection with the broader cultural, social, political and economic aspects of twenty-first century capitalism. In Shaviro's estimation, the "soft fascism" of corporate networks combines aggressive predation with obedient conformity, leading to the often unacknowledged "obscene reverse side" of the official story, which is the anxiety that one can no longer disconnect from networks. One thinks here of the people in Werner Herzog's *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World* (USA, 2016) who try to escape video game addiction, who live in radio telescope zones in order to be as far away as possible from cell phone towers, or whose lives have been so disrupted by cruel anonymous trolls that they now perceive the Internet to be evil. The question of connectedness not only affects services like food supplies, fuel delivery and commerce, as noted in the film, but affects people much like addiction, making meaning ever more contingent and subjecting social relations to a process of decentration. What does it mean to be a node that is connected to a network, asks Shaviro, if there is no escape from capitalism as a distributed network phenomenon?[27] Feedback, whether negative or positive, seems to be the only option, with personalization of content and produsage, as Axel Bruns calls it, as the way to locate and affirm the self in the network's ideological grid.[28] Shaviro reiterates Deleuze's thesis that we have shifted from disciplinary societies to control societies that function through constant participation-inducing communication and feedback, with new forms of control that are flexible and distributed. The network "does not need to put us under surveillance," he writes, "because we belong to it, we exist for it already."[29]

One can nevertheless imagine people using control systems in addition to disciplinary confinement just out of sheer confusion regarding the nature of the new systems, or one's place within them: discipline for the losers and the deviants; control for the winners and conformists. Anselm Franke and Teixeira Pinto argue that in the context of the digital revolution, with its interest in cybernetics, information systems, game theory and evolutionary biology, the inability to think outside the subsumption of labour links "post-Internet" aesthetics and political theory with the social Darwinist survivalism of the past centuries and the conservative revolution brought about by Reaganomics. This convergence with economic liberalism subtends the bad faith that announces the digital technotopia of the sharing economy. Science turns into a cipher for authority: "By subjugating the 'products of the human imagination' to biological functionality, evolutionary aesthetics is but a defeatist call for adaptation via conformism."[30] Lovink argues that such control operates as ideology precisely because the social is now perceived through the gadgets of social media – or what Lacan otherwise referred to as *lathouses*, non-objectified objects. Lovink writes:

> Under this spell of desire for the social, led by the views and opinions of our immediate social circle, our daily routines are as follows: view recent stories first, fine-tune filter preferences, jump to first unread, update your life with events, clear and refresh all, not now, save links to read for later, see full conversation, mute your ex, set up a secret board, run a poll, comment through the social plug-in, add video to your profile, choose between love, haha, wow, sad, and angry, engage with those who mention you while tracking the changes in relationship status of others, follow a key opinion leader, receive notifications, create a photo spread that links to your avatar, repost a photo, get lost in the double-barrel river of your lifetime, prevent friends from seeing updates, check out something based on a recommendation, customize cover images, create 'must-click' headlines, chat with a friend while noticing that '1,326,595 people like this topic'.[31]

We have arrived at the stage of "social media platforms as ideology," Lovink argues, but he seems at the same time to route the question of ideology by underscoring the ubiquity of networks. Moreover, he latches network ideology onto the success of postmodernism and the failure of Marxism. Identity politics and cultural studies, however, are now imbricated in the entrepreneurial values of venture capital and the reality of growing social inequality. Despite all this we remain plugged in: "[w]hen it comes to social media we have an 'enlightened false consciousness' in which we know very well what we are doing when we are fully sucked in, but we do it anyway."[32]

The resulting "technological mode of the social" and "becoming infrastructure" seem sorely inadequate: ideology = software? As Anna Sergeevna Frovola and Yury Grigorievich Volkov argue, the dominant ideological position within network society, despite anti-capitalist protest, remains neoliberalism. It is essential, they argue, to distinguish between the ideological basis of the network society in general and constructs that are profitable to the network and its efficient operation.[33] As both Lovink and these authors contend, the network society "filters" certain ideologies, particularly those of the old left, leading to a multidimensional network universe of conflict. For the latter authors, only an ideology of global humanism, premised on freedom, equality and creative development, can prevent the dissolution of the human person into flows and networks.

The situation that is developing with regard to artificial intelligence and the quest for a perfect cybernetic society is similar to what Žižek recounts as debates that were had with Stalin regarding the status of money in a future communist society. While some argued there would still be money in communism,

others argued for its disappearance. Stalin responded to both left and right positions by saying that in the communist society of the future there would be money and there would not be money, meaning that some would have money while others would not.[34] This Stalinist riddle contradicts the utopian thrust of Paul Mason's theory of post-capitalism, which argues, based on the Marxist labour theory of value, that an information-based economy cannot in the long run remain a capitalist economy.[35] In his review of Mason's book, Christian Fuchs argues that Mason's work is not only overly optimistic but also techno-deterministic in the way that it "underestimates the antagonistic character of digital capitalism and its imperialistic tendency to create new inner colonies of exploitation."[36] Žižek similarly worries that in the present drift towards the digitalization of all aspects of our lives, including biogenetic enhancement, commons are not opposed to capitalization, leading to post-capitalism, but superimposed with it in such a way that the end of humanity, where computers know us better than we know ourselves, will actually result in a new class society in which some specially selected humans will have greater control. Moreover, in keeping with the insights of the cognitivist scientist Thomas Metzinger, Žižek worries that our immersion into a universal machine will result in unknown forms of suffering and new terrifying forms of torture and trauma.[37] This future is not simply material for films like *Gattaca* (1997), *Hunger Games* (2012) and *Elysium* (2013), but as Nick Dyer-Witheford writes in the first pages of *Cyber-Proletariat*, in May of 2014 it was reported that venture capital funds like the Hong Kong-based Deep Knowledge Ventures, which specializes in biotechnology, age-related disease drugs and regenerative medicine projects, are also making use of Artificial Intelligence instruments for investment decision-making in the health sector and pension funds. The decision-making algorithms they use are similar to those that led to the 2008 financial debacle. Dyer-Witheford contrasts these areas of speculation with the death of coal miners in Turkey in 2014, caused by cost-cutting on safety equipment after the mine was privatized. He remarks wrily that the dead would not be needing regenerative medicine or anti-aging treatments, bringing to the fore "the relation of cybernetics to class."[38] Protests in solidarity with the miners were among some 5000 similar protests in Turkey, against which the Erdogan regime attempted to ban Twitter and YouTube. Dyer-Witheford's point is the coexistence in contemporary cybernetic capitalism of brutal living and working conditions with extraordinary high-technology and artificial intelligences.

When, in a kind of reverse immanentism, technology is fetishized into a technological sublime, politics and culture are reduced to technology. What would a global social movement look like if it had as one of its slogans that we take not only money but technology out of politics, or, as Badiou would have it, that we make distinctions between the truths of science and the truths

of politics? This would be an attempt to make some sense of our over-reliance on computer modeling as the means to solve all of our problems, as opposed to the futurist assumption that the only way forward is to pursue scientific and technological developments, equating post-capitalism with the new "socio-technical structures."[39] Computer algorithms, for example, measure inputs and outputs. An algorithm might detect that a prisoner in Guantánamo Bay was happy to receive some gruel one day, but it might not be able to infer from this that the prisoner would prefer to be home or that this prisoner should not be imprisoned at all. Today, automated decision-making systems, like for instance predictive algorithms that are consulted by judges in prison sentencing, are increasingly being used as instruments of social control. The point, as Cathy O'Neill puts it, is that technology cannot replace human judgement and morality.[40]

Writing more abstractly and also somewhat more fatalistically, Galloway and Thacker argue that the expansive nature of network power is now coincident with social life and carries with it the most non-human and misanthropic "all too human" tendencies: "connectivity is a threat," they argue, and "the network is a weapons system." "Since interactive technologies such as the Internet are based on multidirectional rather than unidirectional command and control," they write, "we expect to see an exponential increase in the potential for exploitation and control through techniques such as monitoring, surveillance, biometrics, and gene therapy."[41] The solution to this, they argue, is a new politics of symmetrical conflict, in which, as opposed to grassroots, insurgent, guerrilla or terrorist conflict, an "exceptional topology" of "antiweb" networks will fight sovereign networks like that of the U.S. military that have adapted to the logic of networks.[42] Political action within a network should therefore be guided by human actors who can operate more politically engaged "counter-protocological" practices against rigid forms of regulatory discipline, which for them includes rhizomatics as a new management style.[43] While Galloway and Thacker's work seems more critical than simple celebrations of electronic commons, these authors' theory of "network being" as a new kind of ontology that is specific to network phenomena is somewhat dubious. It leads them to the mistaken notion that counter-protocological practices must follow the many-to-many and non-anthropomorphic logic of the swarm. If they correctly understand the limits of rhizomatic thinking in one instance they could be more consistent on this issue. According to Žižek, the issue is not to better know how machines work. Just as hackers understand that all machines have exploits, the solution for us is to call for more alienation since that is what makes us human and in this sense the space of human freedom revolves around that which is non-functional.[44]

Writing with similar reserve regarding the democratic potential of information and communications technologies, Evgeny Morozov argues in *The Net*

Delusion that networks tend to overpromise and underdeliver when it comes to meaningful social participation.[45] Morozov holds that if we were to truly accept that history is contingent, we would have to reject technological determinism, which cripples ethics and obscures the question of human responsibility. The deterioration of conditions of privacy, for example, is accepted by people and assumed to be inevitable as society capitulates to corporate and government systems of control. Citing Raymond Williams, Morozov argues that such determinism reproduces existing social relations and represents an end of historical thinking that is consistent with the theses of Francis Fukuyama on the inevitability of liberal free market capitalism. As those who comment on the link between cybernetics and the Cold War understand, the close fit between networks and neoliberalism is hardly accidental as an ideology of the end of History. Determinism masks what it is that is social, cultural and political about networks, presenting everything as diectly networked, or in Morozov's analysis, technological. Like technological determinism, network ideology is simply, as he puts it, too expansionist and monopolistic.[46] Net criticism should therefore not be network-centric, which only contributes to the further reification of the conditions of connectivity. What we require is a radical net politics. Paraphrasing Marx in his critique of Proudhon, we could say: "So long as [communists] look for science and merely make systems, so long as they are at the beginning of the struggle, they see in *networks* nothing but *networks*, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society."[47] Of course to be a communist in the 1840s was a revolutionary prospect. Today one can easily criticize capitalism because no one believes in it.

To speak of cybernetic equilibrium in the age of unprecedented ecological crisis, rampant militarism, feudal era levels of social inequality and out of control markets is laughable. Without conceding to cybernetic theory, then, which provides a technicist and deterministic view of the stakes involved in social struggles, it is nevertheless necessary to appreciate the fact that network ideology produces theories of network culture that are premised on such cybernetic and systems theory.[48] Barney's account is extensive in its sociological detail, so much so that its contextual view contrasts dramatically with those theories that have attempted to focus on networks close up, providing more technologically-specific descriptions of network phenomena. Among the latter is the now canonical figure Yochai Benkler, whose 2006 book on *The Wealth of Networks* supports a liberal-libertarian interpretation of the new network technologies.[49] Benkler coined the phrase "networked information economy" (NIE) to describe the new technological foundations of liberal democracies and markets. On the whole Benkler believes that the NIE is inherently liberating. New information platforms, software and online environments allow for greater individual freedom, better democratic participation and a more critical and self-reflexive culture as a mechanism for human development.[50]

Like Castells, Benkler recognizes a shift towards an information-based economy and networked communications environment. His tendency towards free-market ideology leads him to the paradoxical conviction that networks create the possibility for more non-market production and more decentralized patterns of production than did the economies of the industrial era. Cooperative action among decentralized players is possible due to the low cost of computation, communication and storage, placing information manipulation in the hands of billions of users. In an unintentional affirmation of the "capitalist communism" thesis of Marx and Negri, Benkler argues that the NIE contributes to nonproprietary strategies, nonmarket organizational forms and nonmarket production. The rise of large-scale cooperative efforts in peer-to-peer production, free and open-source software, citizen journalism, multi-user entertainment or Wikipedia-style information commons, suggests user-driven innovation beyond capitalism's profit motive and in favour of social connectedness. Of course Marx never thought that capitalism is based entirely on human motive and so we need to view Benkler's theses as politically naive in comparison. We can nevertheless draw from Benkler's research a few insights that might elude a more general approach.

For Benkler the networked information economy reflects the core political values of liberal societies, from citizen participation to critical culture and political morality. The NIE gives individuals more autonomy, he argues, allowing them to do more for themselves and in common with others. People can also do more, independently of the permission of others, since research is now less dependent on institutions and mass media. They can also do more in concert with others, independently of traditional mass party organizations and formal workplace organizations. Benkler is of course aware that this represents an inversion of traditional understandings of collaboration. He writes: "The very fluidity and low commitment required of any given cooperative relationship increases the range and diversity of cooperative relations people can enter, and therefore of collaborative projects they can conceive of as open to them."[51]

Autonomy is therefore defined as low commitment, based on the weak ties and minimum social bonding that are required for and generated by networked connectivity. The benefit of this for Benkler is that individuals are less susceptible to manipulation by the owners of mass media communications infrastructure or by authoritarian governments. Networked public spheres emerge alongside established authorities, expanding the number of nodal points from which information and opinion can emerge. Against the propensity of networks to create weak ties, he argues that the strong ties that are based on family relations and friendships can in fact be strengthened by network technology and that such strong ties are likely to be complemented rather than destroyed by weaker nonmarket connections that allow for limited-purpose, low-intensity and loose relationships that are user-centric and cooperative. A

concomitant loosening of the hierarchical aspects of relationships allows individuals to "weave their own web of supporting peer relations."[52] This mitigates the view that networks lead directly to social fragmentation and alienation. Against the critique of information overload and opinion cacaphony – the Babel objection – Benkler argues that distributed connections are nevertheless preferable to conditions of capitalized monopoly. Net democracy allows nonmarket actors and communities of interest to challenge centralized flows of communication. Lastly, against the possible charge of technological determinism, Benkler argues that there is nothing that guarantees that networked relations will be more liberal, nonmarket, critical, democratic or innovative.

Emphasizing the loose affiliations created by networks, Benkler acknowledges the market conditions that structure the emergence of networks and information. These relations are not natural, he says, but derive from their importance to human beings.[53] The question for him is how far the market is allowed to reach in terms of defining social values. The way that networks facilitate voluntary, nonproprietary and nonmarket-based cooperation allows the social production practice of a networked public sphere to challenge the ways that the capitalist state tends to favour industrial and mass media incumbents. The main political issue, then, is the extent to which information production will be governed as a commons, an apt question for the age of media giants like Google, Apple and Facebook, and in light of increased government control through data mining and surveillance. Not surprisingly, Benkler's analysis steers clear of the public provision of communications media infrastructure.

Like a proper Cold War liberal, Benkler proposes a cybernetic model for network governance, a continuous and non-problematic feedback between social practices, economic organization and new technologies. His approach to the question of sociality is paradoxical to say the least. There is no need, he says, to think that the Internet will lead to a decline in meaningful human connections with friends, family and neighbours.[54] The Internet does not supplant relations, he argues, but supplements them. In a cynical use of Pierre Bourdieu's work, Benkler says that people with higher levels of social and cultural capital will be better networked and will achieve better results in terms of political participation. Further, the more autonomous an individual, the more they will cultivate both strong and weak ties, weaving creative webs of fluid relationships. The fear of the loss of community, he says, is more a form of nostalgia for something that perhaps never existed than an accurate diagnosis of the present.[55] At worst, the Internet strengthens weak ties, otherwise known as limited-liability social relationships. Research is not oriented towards finding out whether networked sociality creates such weak ties, for which the evidence is affirmative, but the significance of such ties and their relation to real-world connections. Social capital and "network capital," however, have a direct connection to what Bourdieu defined as the field of power. Although Benkler

dismisses the nostalgia for face-to-face community, he makes a great effort to find evidence that would indicate that networks actually reinforce strong tie communities. All of this says nothing about the nature of social relations from the perspective of the critique of political economy and capitalist ideology. As job security and social welfare decline, people turn to whatever social connections they have as means of survival. Thirty year-olds with enormous student debts and who live in their parents' basement do so not because of their need for strong ties but due to increasing economic inequality and insecurity within the framework of neoliberal society.

Benkler refers to the capitalization of human labour in the increasingly efficient social factory as the non-problematic "human communicative capacity" of the individual producer. In his model, then, the socius and the machinic remain fully independent, allowing for the emergence of "Joe Einstein" figures in the creative and knowledge industries. Although the activities of such "non-market" people rely on the affordances of the public domain, Benkler ignores the question of public educational infrastructure as well as capitalist capture and appropriation. He also ignores how networked distribution not only creates Joe Einsteins but also a proliferation of Joe Whatevers. The closest he comes to acknowledging this phenomenon is by addressing the relationship of network topology to that of the "power law distribution." This phenomenon, which is characteristic of the Web, the Internet and the blogosphere, explains the rise of hierarchies in networked communication and the probability, as Benkler puts it, that "any given web site will be linked to by a huge number of people, and a very large probability that for a given web site only one other site, or even no site, will link to it."[56] This question of popularity, attention and probability distributions is not a policy problem, he argues. Distributions with very long tails and a small number of high yield sites and events is referred to as an effect of transitory clustering by communities of interest. For Benkler, this is nothing but a feature of freedom and the ability to choose one's interests. He writes:

> It turns out that we are not intellectual lemmings. We do not use the freedom that the network has made possible to plunge into the abyss of incoherent babble. Instead, through iterative processes of cooperative filtering and 'transmission' through the high visibility nodes, the low-end thin tail turns out to be a peer-produced filter and transmission medium for a vastly larger number of speakers than was imaginable in the mass-media model.[57]

Unfortunately, such media formalism is a model of information distribution and not a model of society, of the good life or the need for struggle. Gramscian

hegemony theory and Deleuzian schizo-theory teach us that we are not simply dominated but that we participate in social subjection. Psychoanalysis teaches that we are not passive spectators but rather interpassive users. Decentralization, democratization, access and participation, as we have seen, are not only possibilities opened up by the net but by neoliberal injunctions, a freedom that is integral to what Franco Berardi refers to as semiocapitalism, or "the new regimes characterized by the fusion between media and capital."[58] The capacity to manipulate symbols is hardly an indication of avant-garde radicality, however, but par for the course in what Lazzarato and others refer to as immaterial labour.[59] One might also consider that many "smart mobs," as Howard Rheingold defines these large collections of technologically coordinated actions, recall the characteristics of what Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* long ago defined as repressive desublimation.[60] Echoing Milton Friedman's slogan that "we are all Keynesians now," Benkler proffers that "[w]e are a networked society now."[61] This is not a state of monadic anomie, he argues, but a condition of being socially well-adjusted, connected in small or large groups and not fundamentally different in terms of human nature. God is in his element. All is well in the network.

Another key text in this "formalist" approach to networks is Clay Shirky's 2008 *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*.[62] Although Shirky is concerned primarily with organizational theory, he gives particular attention to the way that individuals and groups form networks, a phenomenon that is emphasized by the ostensible anonymity of Internet use. Similarly to Benkler, and unlike Panzieri and Deleuze, Shirky believes that communication tools are simple, value-free means to channel existing social motivations. The main argument of his book, and thus its title, is that the formation of groups has become what Seb Paquet defines as "ridiculously easy" due to the low cost of communication and the little time, effort and attention that it requires. Commitment and strong bonds of solidarity, he argues, are a fairly rare occurrence in the world of social media. Instead, and due to the human tendency to share and cooperate, ridiculously easy group formations and mass amateurization are the more common instance.[63]

New tools create simple ways to create groups and to coordinate collective activity without the oversight of institutional structures, causing utopianists to imagine a post-hierarchical paradise. The flipside to this is that as groups grow in size their connections become more difficult to sustain, which normally requires the intervention of management, coordination and organization. Electronic communication networks have brought into being new kinds of group cooperation that are loosely structured and yet not based on institutional direction. They are larger, more informal and more distributed than in the past. They allow for maximum freedom for individuals to participate with fewer of the traditional complications of group life. Shared awareness and

possibility, however, do not always lead to shared responsibility. Shirky notes the propensity of email communication to quickly devolve into blather or puerile, fatuous conversation. Collaborative production, like a Wikipedia page for instance, increases tension as no one person can get credit for what they are doing nor is anyone accountable. Garrett Hardin's concept of the "tragedy of the commons" implies that commons are only ever a collective good when everyone agrees to not behave selfishly.[64] Individual greed and cheating clashes with altruism, leading to the solution that one has to apportion shares or create conditions of mutually agreed coercion, such as taxation.

All of these aspects of networked group formation affect the communications ecosystem, as witnessed for instance in the shift from tightly controlled production by traditional broadcast media and publishers to that of mass amateurization where the process of filter then publish is altered to publish then filter. "Never have so many people been so free to say and to do so many things with so many other people." With the Internet, Shirky says, "you don't have to convince anyone that something is a good idea before trying it."[65] Opinion, culture and products are ubiquitous as user-generated content reflects the many-to-many model of global networked communication in which billions participate. The register of the private and of privacy loses all sense except for limit cases where the popularity of a node causes it to shift from interactivity towards one-way communication due to a scale that is too unwieldy to allow for direct feedback, a paradox within networked communication in which a mass audience focused on one node will reproduce the traditional imbalances of broadcast media.

In contrast to Benkler, Shirky confirms Bloois's worry that public institutions are threatened by networked commons and asserts that today's social media are more of a challenge to modern society than a definite improvement.[66] Although he agrees with Benkler in noting the rise of nonmaket and nonprofit commons-based collaboration, he also notes the effects of power law distribution, such that a broadcast model tends to predominate over both a loose conversation model and a tight conversation model among a closed and restricted number of nodes. Not mentioned among the possibilities of interacting elements is the fantasy of absolute horizontality, where distribution is invisible and anonymous. A related problem is the evil of banality. Shirky argues that it is much easier to leave one's mark on the world than to make a significant contribution. This is difficult enough to manage in terms of peer production, but much more complex in terms of collective social and political action. The increased speed of communication leads to shared awareness and the possibility of group action. This can be seen in various group formations, from flash mobs to large-scale protests, where advance planning can be supplemented or even replaced by real-time coordination, making the behaviour of crowds all the less predictable. With the use of new social tools, a small handful

of committed individuals can direct tens of thousands of barely motivated ones. The searchability of social life, Shirky says, allows people with common interests to find one another more easily. The downside to this, he adds, is that this is as true for progressive tendencies as for anti-social networks, as described for instance by Angela Nagle in her study of the "leaderless digital counter-revolution" of the alt-right.[67]

When it comes to political organization, the long tail phenomenon of the power law distribution connects to what Duncan Watts and Steve Strogatz have defined as the "small network" or "small world" pattern where small groups tend to be more tightly knit because they have fewer connections and allow for reciprocity, whereas large groups are sparsely connected and its members are consequently more separated from one another.[68] Political mobilization is most effective when comprised of small groups of dense clusters that are sparsely connected by "hubs" and "hinges" to other small groups. A pattern of many sparsely connected dense clusters is more effective in terms of connectivity than one large group. Such small groups are more resistant to dispersal and better able to maintain motivation over time. Small groups are better able to filter information, increasing the depth of connections through trust and by bridging connections to other groups.

Although Shirky argues that networked sociality tends to reproduce existing social inequalities, what he does not mention is the fact that differentiation among groups is an inherent tendency within the open architecture of networks. Writing from an information theory and cybernetics perspective, Tiziana Terranova argues that network cultures should be more aware of the dynamics of the interconnectedness of information communications systems. Warning that meaningful experiences are under siege by an informational culture, Terranova believes that it is nevertheless important to understand network "physics" on a technical level, a move that avoids the question of subjectivity by proposing a "pre-individual" level of analysis.[69] The idea that the Internet has led to the creation of a "hypernetwork" that is able to connect every point to every other in real time – "the immediate openness of everybody and everything to everybody and everything else" – and giving precedence to flows over place, brings not only the sense of a single information space of connection, but also the dynamics of small, mutant and nonlinear cultural worlds.[70] Terranova provides a technicist explanation of this process of differentiation, suggesting that it is "built into" the structure of the Internet. Since 1973, when DARPA (U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) transformed its ARPANET from NCP (Network Control Program) to TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol), the introduction of an open architecture has allowed individual networks to stand on their own. The Internet's open architecture requires no central control except for DNS and IP address coordination and some consistency of standards. Notwithstanding the human need

for connection, Shirky's small groups might be subject to the same difficulties that individual networks face within an open system. As Terranova puts it,

> Decentralized and distributed networks, although intrinsically more robust and resilient than centralized ones, present the intrinsic problem of a tendency towards differentiation and drift that threatens to turn the open network into an archipelago of disconnected and isolated islands.[71]

According to the pre-individual as well as collectivist logic that Terranova finds at work in biological computing, a diagram of power for hyperconnected organisms, the resulting socius is not unlike that of a Reality TV show in which participants are expected to relinquish their sense of individuality and accept being forced to interact with other individuals in a competitive structure of punishment and rewards. Collaboration overlaps with competition in a game in which individuals seek to aggregate with other players in an abstract network of surveillance and soft control.[72] The peer-to-peer ethos of the software movement transmogrifies into the peer-to-peer-pressure of social struggle. Galloway and Thacker argue that the most that one can do to resist being exploited by networks is to become unaccountable, to become nonexistent by refusing representation or camouflaging oneself into disingenuous data. Future avant-garde practices, they argue, will be comprised of tactics of nonexistence that are not measurable and through which one becomes bland, negligible and featureless.[73]

When one evaluates the problems of a networked biocapitalism, with its weak ties, incredibly easy and temporary group formations, propensity to produce incompatibilities and disconnection, propensity to reproduce inequalities, and non-human informational logic, one begins to question the wisdom of reducing theory and praxis to the vulgarity of such ontologized network immanentism. A small worlds pattern might make for good organizational capacity but it does not by itself address the dynamic of the social field. Decrying both cyber-utopianism as well as network centrism – the idea that politics can be reduced to a set of communication tools rather than understood in terms of a total social ecology – Morozov warns that in all political contexts, in both liberal societies and authoritarian regimes, the state is best positioned to benefit from the imbalance of power in a decentralized communication environment.[74] Differentiation and divergence are necessary to politics, but they do not necessarily contribute to a radical polity that can oppose systems that are at odds with equality. Nor do network incompatibilities allow for emancipatory politics. As Badiou argues, difference is not constitutive; difference is simply what there is since all people are different. Our goal, he says, should be to produce sameness:

> We've come out of a period of the cult of difference that was, ultimately, fairly negative. A truly great politics aims, rather, at producing a unity with a differentiated material. This was, after all, the supreme goal of internationalism: there are cultures, civilizations, and nations, but ultimately you have to set yourself up at the point where all that doesn't prevent you from acting together politically. Politics goes, then, from diversity to the same…[75]

I will return to the question of network politics in the chapters on a networked avant garde and on sociality and the new organizations. Suffice it here to say that the formal or technicist approach to networks reveals certain tendencies that need to be related to a broader theoretical framework that situates networks within the processes of a post-industrial, post-Fordist and global information economy. We require a critical theory of network culture and society rather than a singularly technicist model of analysis.

Thinking Networks Critically

Although an ontologized network immanentism might allow us to better appreciate the technical workings of networks, its reductionist and deterministic aspects do not account for the ways in which ideology is operative in these new circumstances. An ontologized network immanentism can as such prevent us from explaining historical change. Determinism makes existing social conditions seem to be eternal or fateful. In this regard the popular slogan according to which "there is no outside" to capitalism should at least be modified with some sense of negative dialectics or some notion that the existing social relations are no more inevitable than the previous stages of development were absolute. Contradictions have a tendency to mature or at least to develop into new contradictions, such that the "cycle of struggles" results in a proletarianization that is not altogether outside of capitalism but that is also not equivalent to it. Even the most immanentist of thinkers are therefore concerned to show that they are not unable to think resistance and change. The paradox of immanentism is that it tends to ground the possibilities for change within highly reductionist analyses of conditions of possibility.

Different versions of the paradoxes of immanentism are at play in the work of different thinkers. Brian Holmes, for instance, is concerned with the "apparatus of capture" that was described in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, and the potential of becoming mobile within the maps of constituted power that bridge the psyche and the objective structures of society.[76] Although Holmes is a cultural theorist and dedicates much of his writing to activist art practices, he is concerned to a large extent with the conditions of

network culture. In *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, he raises the issue of whether or not we can build networked resistance to corporate capitalism.[77] Since the 1960s, he argues, the vanguard movements of the old left, including the critiques of the Frankfurt School, were replaced with the assertion of subjectivity, the personal and a poetics of resistance. At the same time, however, the 1970s shift towards the flexibilization of labour reversed the countercultural critique by appropriating its refusal of discipline and emphasis on autonomy and self-expression. Biopower mixed with semiotic production; cultural studies mixed with new forms of management; knowledge mixed with bureaucratic systems. The result has been the creation of a virtual class of cultural producers whose "flexible" personalities are tracked by marketing experts and fed back into commodification.

Holmes describes neoliberal globalization as a vast system that consolidates networked performance through movement-predicting software that tracks, identifies and elicits desire. In order to resist the "liberal fascism" of the virtual class, "networked protesters" can seize the Internet to organize and subvert those sites that were formerly controlled by corporations and governments. For Holmes, the Internet provides one potential "escape strategy." Just as the autonomists in the 1960s called for an exodus from the factories, he considers the space of electronic communication a potential "e-scape" from the social factory.[78] Since the human subject is today the target of technological manipulation, Holmes proposes an active indistinction of identity as a means to renew collective autonomy. These can be expressed as protesting multitudes, as collective phantoms like Luther Blisset and Reclaim the Streets, or as over-identification pranks like those of the Yes Men. Escape is a "gradual process, a social and psychic experiment."[79] The issue, then, is the capacity for self-organization and networked collaboration. This does not, however, prevent him from connecting the Internet with the infrastructure of empire, with its "thick connectivity" of worldwide communications technologies, security regimes and complex governance.

A different approach to the problem of power and resistance is put forward by Jodi Dean in her book *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*.[80] Dean's approach to the question of networked communications emphasizes the imbrication of the psyche in social structures by linking networks with capitalism and the two of these with the psychoanalytic notion of drive. Whereas Holmes rightly associates production, marketing and commodification with the manipulation of desire, Dean adds to this a further psychoanalytic twist. The Freudian notion of death drive, interpreted through the work of Lacan and Žižek, complicates the question of feedback, capture and escape by underscoring how all of these are part of the structure of what Dean refers to as "communicative capitalism."

The background to the development of communicative capitalism is described by Dean through Fred Turner's distinction between the advent in the

1960s of the new left, which focused on political campaigns like voter registration and student and antiwar protests, and the New Communalism of the Bay Area, which rejected class struggle and emphasized instead a libertarian ideal of personal freedom.[81] New Communalists like Stewart Brand, co-writer of the Whole Earth Catalog, sought to challenge the conformity of Cold War era mass society with the values of lifestyle experimentation, communal living, entrepreneurialism and computerized information networks. Dean's critique of the New Communalists is that while they sought to escape the bleak technocratic vision of the military-industrial complex, they nevertheless adopted two of its key features: cybernetic systems theory and neoliberal market ideology. While they rejected the establishment, they ignored their own ideological commitments to capitalism and came to view technological innovation as a panacea. The New Communalists were successful to a great extent in creating a new counterculture, which emphasized research teams, flexibility and technological skill, all of which have become central to post-Fordist restructuring. While they succeeded in transforming the computer industry, they failed to challenge the spread of ICTs as technocratic means of control, ushering in pro-capitalist norms that amplify neoliberal governmentality through communicative capitalism. Brand himself later started a company that offered services to the state and the military. The basis of communicative capitalism, according to Dean, is "the reorientation behind the last thirty years of neoliberal excess and its increases in inequality and immiseration that have paraded around as expansions in information, flexibility, participation, and responsiveness."[82]

New Communalists conflate technology with politics and despite their anti-establishment attitudes work with governments and corporations in such a way that knowledge serves neoliberal power. The ensuing communicative capitalism is characterized by, among other things, the failure to address social inequalities, the emergence of "whatever" being, and the circulation of affects and spectacle, all of which pose a problem to leftist political organization. Dean's use of psychoanalysis emphasizes two key ideas: the decline of symbolic efficiency, which she draws from the work of Žižek, and the Lacanian notion of drive. The idea of the decline in symbolic efficiency is premised on the Lacanian theory that humans are subjects of language. We are both connected to the world through language and alienated from it through the superego pressure of the symbolic rules of social life. The question of ideology underscores the way that beliefs that are often disavowed nevertheless underlie our actual practices. The decline of symbolic efficiency implies the instability of meaning, which results is greater affective intensity. Electronically mediated subjectivity, Dean says, suspends the master signifiers that stabilize meaning through the chain of signifiers. Although the Lacanian lesson is that there are no social guarantees for meaning, Dean locates meaning more specifically in the proliferation of opinion in globalized communications networks.

While postmodernists tend to interpret these new conditions of semiotic flow as opening new possibilities for subjective experiences and intensities, Žižek interprets the decline of symbolic efficiency as a more intense experience of closure. As Dean puts it,

> while it may seem that the decline of symbolic efficiency ushers in a new era of freedom from rigid norms and expectations, the fluidity and adaptability of imaginary identities are accompanied by fragility and insecurity. Imaginary identities are incapable of establishing a firm place to stand, a position from which one can make sense of one's experiences, one's worlds.[83]

The resulting conditions of cyberspace and virtuality threaten social interaction by desubjectivizing language and speech, dissolving the boundaries between reality and fantasy, and attempting to fill in the gaps in signification through imaginary plenitude. For Dean, this weakening of symbolic efficiency is fundamental to communicative capitalism.

The second psychoanalytic point she makes, which contrasts with Holmes's view, is that communicative networks are not effective because they exploit our insatiable desires, but because they rely on the repetitive intensity of drive. Freud's notion of drive refers to the tendency in the human organism to seek a state of homeostatic equilibrium, to at times reduce and regulate the amount of stimulus but also to sometimes go beyond the tendency to self-preservation. Žižek associates drive with Hegelian negativity and uses this to explain the way that subjects are able at times to act outside the coordinates of the dominant social order. Whereas Žižek interprets drive as a potentially radical feature of subjectivity, Dean's interpretation of drive understands it in terms of the social reality of communicative capitalism. Although there is something lost when the anti-historicist thrust of Lacanian concepts are reduced to the particularities of social context, Dean's argument is that within communicative capitalism drive does *not* imply a convergence between human organisms and machines. Drive, she argues, counters such "immanent naturalism" by emphasizing the "inhuman" that is part of the human and that breaks with the flow of life. This understanding is fully contradictory as she also states that networks are not merely networks of computers but are also affective networks through which we stage our own passive entrapment.[84] "Conceived in terms of drive," she writes, "networked communications circulate less as potentials for freedom than as the affective intensities produced through and amplifying our capture."[85]

The main difficulty with Dean's approach is her emphasis on drive as merely repetitive, which is something that even drive cannot ensure. While drive is said to deepen the effects of communicative capitalism, it is not understood

by Dean as something that can lessen its hold on us since the grip of communicative capitalism is already an aspect of the decline of symbolic efficiency: "[t]he compulsive movement of drive shapes networked media as they enact the loss of symbolic efficiency."[86] Both the value and the limitation of Dean's approach is its emphasis on the near-absolute conditions of capture. Aware of this, and concerned that we have lost the capacity to think politically, she says that our challenge is to produce "the conditions of possibility for breaking out of or redirecting the loop of drive."[87] But even here we seem blocked in our efforts. The problem with the networked media of communicative capitalism is that they challenge collective identity by replacing it with instant connection through networked association. Political parties are replaced by clicktivism, online petitions and what Dean calls "whatever blogging." The experience of loss of real connection to community becomes the basis for the new conditions of web belonging. Because this networked symbolic order is so full of gaps the Real can never appear, she says. Subjects are endlessly shifting through the flow of signs and only occasionally get stuck on knots of surplus enjoyment, a condition that Dean associates with the dominance of Lacan's Discourse of the Analyst, where meaning slides endlessly due to the inscrutability of the position of the analyst, which we could say stands in for the affective instability of communication networks. In this scenario, she says, authority is remaindered and knowledge is hidden. However, that is the point of the Discourse of the Analyst since in psychoanalysis it is the analysand and not the analyst who is supposed to exit transference.

By associating communicative capitalism with the Discourse of the Analyst, for which Dean presumes the foreclosure of a master signifier (meaning) and the entrenchment of whatever being, one wonders if there is any space remaining for something like a talking cure or some other kind of knowledge. With the decline of symbolic efficiency, Dean says, there is no space for fantasy: "[t]he formula for fantasy does not appear."[88] This is inaccurate since the top level of the graph in Lacan's Discourse of the Analyst is a-$, which mirrors Lacan's formula for fantasy ($-a, or $-drive-desire-a).[89] Lacan emphasizes how fantasy is not simply an attribute of individual imagination but has a readymade structure, something that would only increase in conditions of communicative capitalism where proprietary software systems and filtering algorithms are put to work managing data flows and selling consumer products. Research undertaken by Facebook in 2013, for example, found evidence that filtering can manipulate politics and produce "massive-scale emotional contagion."[90] Fantasy is therefore fully present in the Discourse of the Aanalyst and in networked communications. The problems to be avoided, then, from a Lacanian-Žižekian perspective, includes a historicist collapse of the Discourse of the Analyst with the situation, on the one hand, which is a tendency that is emphasized by discourse theory and the immanentism of new media and

communications studies, and on the other a correlative behaviourism. Both historicism and behaviourism tend to dispense with dialectics, allowing for a more devastating social critique but a weaker appreciation of the possibilities for change. Rather than using psychoanalysis and ideology critique to show how communicative capitalism is incomplete and impermanent, Dean does the opposite, using psychoanalysis to show how the conditions of capture undermine subjectivity and reinforce the conditions of exploitation. To place emphasis on the Discourse of the Analyst in this way tends to ignore how the play of the signifier in the unconscious is always already there before the subject enters transference. Lacan, it seems to me, would not ontologize "whatever being" in the manner of someone like Giorgio Agamben, since, as Lacan put it, "the unconscious does not lend itself to ontology."[91] The unconscious is neither being nor non-being.

Another problem that arises in Dean's interpretation is the assumption that since the circuits of drive of communicative capitalism diminish symbolic efficiency, the symbolic order that is an element in Lacan's tripartite formula of Imaginary-Symbolic-Real is de-emphasized and displaced by a greater emphasis on the Imaginary and the Real.[92] However, the registers of the IRS cannot be rationalized in this way and the Symbolic, as Lacan says, resists limitation. Dean could have also looked to the spaces in between the IRS, locating the nonsensical whatever coordinates of affective networks in the space of phallic enjoyment between the Real and the Symbolic but preserving meaning, as Lacan does, in the space between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. This is the space of the sinthome, of imaginary identification with the Symbolic that undermines it through the active construction of an ideal ego. In Lacan's terms, there is no Other of the Other that can carry out the Last Judgement, not even today's cybernetic systems.[93] Of course Dean is aware of this and points to the fact that communicative capitalism is not a closed environment but an open, distributed and chaotic feedback system of affective networks. But to conflate drive with cybernetic systems theory tends to shore up the totalizing logic of cybernetics rather than facilitate the kind of political analysis and practice that Dean otherwise advocates.[94]

Elsewhere in *Blog Theory*, Dean proposes that the emphasis in communicative capitalism on technology leads one to think of it in terms of the Discourse of the University, where, according to Lacan, the function of knowledge is in the position of active agency and knowledge production exploits subjects in the quest for surplus value.[95] However, there is no reason why the conditions of communicative capitalism could nor be read across all four of Lacan's discourses – that of the analyst, the master, the hysteric and the university. Regardless, this second option seems to me to be far more apt as a sociological description. As I will discuss in later chapters of this book, there is no reason why the Discourse of the Analyst should be weighted in favour of capitalism rather

than the avant garde. The subject in the case of the Discourse of the University is more fully capitalized and exploited since it is produced as surplus and as the limit of capitalist relations, which presuppose the demand for new knowledge. In this regard, the capitalist relation speaks through the production of knowledge, or better stated, in the form of information and data commodities. And then there is also the structure of the Discourse of the Capitalist.

Our analysis so far has argued for an understanding of the dialectical contradictions that shape the capitalist features of networks as both means of production and relations of production. In *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, Christian Fuchs provides a materialist critique of the international division of digital labour (IDDL) that makes effective use of the autonomist theory of the social factory but without radically altering the Marxist labour theory of value.[96] Labour, according to Fuchs, is the blind spot of communication and cultural studies, which prevents a thorough analysis of information and communication technologies. The labour chain that produces ICTs can be said to be based on different interconnected modes of production, as opposed, one might say, to an ideology of nodes of production. Although wage labour characterizes the capitalist mode of production, the mining industry that produces the minerals and metals that are needed to make most communication technologies, from laptop computers to mobile phones, tablets, digital cameras and MP3 players, is managed in some countries in conditions of near slavery that involve a compulsion of physical labour that is far from immaterial. Without the capitalist class exploitation that takes place in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where neoliberal policies have privatized the mining industry, there would be no digital media and no information economy. In countries like China, and in companies like Foxconn, which makes Apple products as well as products for other high-tech companies, employees lead stressful lives, are placed under company surveillance and security, and work fifty and sixty hours per week with one rest day on average every two weeks. Their salaries are not high enough to meet their basic needs and workplace suicides are attributed to individual psychology. Whereas Chinese enterprises were state-owned before 1978, since then the neoliberalization of industry and the process of primitive accumulation has resulted in the creation of the largest exploited working class of the global network society. In the case of India, the deregulated software and computer industry, which is oriented towards exportation and is financed through foreign direct investment, is based on highly educated and qualified workers whose salaries are anywhere from ten to forty percent of salaries for the same work in the United States. New participatory management techniques in the software industry and work surveillance lead to a dual process of employee competition and individualization, maximizing profits within conditions of job insecurity.

Meanwhile, in Silicon Valley, ICT companies account for the greater share of profits. The financial success of these companies has not prevented them

from seeking ways to reduce their labour costs through temp work, part-time work, contract work, outsourcing and frequent layoffs. Flexibilized, project-based and overtime work is presented by companies and perceived by employees as part of the ideology of what Andrew Ross has termed the "no-collar" workplace. Eighty-five hour work weeks are accepted as part of a combined company culture and entrepreneurialization of the self. Fuchs refers to this class of workers as a "labour aristocracy" that accepts the neoliberal demand of a poor work-life balance in exchange for the pretence that corporate "playbour" can deliver on the emancipatory vision of the 1960s new left: autonomy, play, spontaneity, creativity, authenticity, openness, plurality, informality, etc.[97] This labour aristocracy, he argues, despite the fact that it toils in conditions of exploitation, avoids unionization and promotes instead the interests of capital. It contrasts not only with the corporate aristocracy of company owners and share-holders, but on the other side of things with the work of the more than four million call centre workers – modern-day sweatshops with rigid performance monitoring, high stress levels and forty percent turnover rates. In some cases, the setting and raising of quotas for such work resembles the techniques that were once used on slave plantations. For Fuchs, the increased production ratios in these various sites of the IDDL labour chain, "a global network of exploited labour," means that what Marx described as the real subsumption of labour exists in addition to formal subsumption.[98] Capital extends the working day and cuts wages so as to increase absolute surplus value. This exists alongside the relative surplus-value gained through standardization, surveillance and Fordist managerial methods.[99]

Based on Fuchs's research, we would need to modify the structure we began with in this chapter – the relation of technology and society – to that of the relation of technology to capitalist society. A Marxist theory of network society would therefore be concerned to address the production of surplus value and class struggle in relation to network ideology. Although Fuchs tends to agree with the autonomist reading of Marx's *Grundrisse* and with the notion of the mass worker, he insists that this is a worker who nevertheless produces surplus value that represents various forms of alienation: alienation from control by capital, from the object and materials of labour, and from the products of labour. Within today's social factory, the means of production are not collectively owned and technology has not eliminated labour time. In traditional workerism, the value of labour power is determined by the ability of organized workers to prevent its devaluation. Where capital seeks to decrease the cost of labour, the more it does so, the less surplus it generates, and so the social factory idea, especially in its utopian communist aspects, represents something of a myth. Through automation, neoliberal capitalism has intensified the conditions of exploitation, poverty and precariousness. And through offshoring it has extended this process on a global scale.

The labour theory of value and the critique of capitalist exploitation are therefore essential to any theory of network culture. Fuchs's book is especially concerned to show how exploitation exists in the case of corporate owned social media like Google, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter. For this he relies on Dallas Smythe's study of audience labour in the framework of a critique of political economy.[100] Smythe's work argued that the consciousness industry of television and radio produces audiences as commodities, largely through advertising as a capital accumulation strategy, which is used to legitimize capitalist class domination. Fuchs uses Smythe's idea of the audience commodity to describe the exploitation of "prosumer" user activities and user data by Internet platforms, which produce what he calls the "Internet prosumer commodity."[101] According to Marisol Sandeval, ninety percent of web platforms monitor users' data and use targeted promotion to deliver audiences to advertisers. Given the pressure to communicate through social media as a means of survival, sometimes required by employers, Fuchs believes that exploitation through social networks is a form of coerced digital labour. Unwittingly, prosumers work for free and contribute to the destruction of valuable jobs. The profits that prosumers generate through advertising revenue is appropriated by corporations that do not pay wages and so have effectively crowdsourced their labour costs to users. Facebook, for instance, exploits forty-five billion hours of work per year. Even if users have free access to platforms they are nevertheless exploited because they produce surplus value. As a classic example of commodity fetishism, the capitalist relations that produce the commodity aspect of Facebook are hidden behind the social relations between users.[102] Users are not duped by corporate platforms but are rather dependent on them since refusal would lead to isolation.

In this context, the "general intellect" and the conditions that produce the "mass worker" serve capitalist interests rather than capitalist communism. Although the rise of knowledge production and a knowledge proletariat would seem to suggest that measuring value in terms of labour time is no longer applicable, Fuchs argues that such an assumption is based on a false reading of the *Grundrisse* which assumes that what Marx described as the "mass worker" exists fully within capitalism. When Marx described labour time as the measure of the needs of the social individual, he was describing an anticipated yet nonexistent communism. It is in communism and not capitalism that labour time ceases to be the measure of wealth. Communism is therefore not constitutive of social networks that exploit labour time. Fuchs writes:

> The Internet is the all-ubiquitous factory and realm of the production of audience commodities. Social media and the mobile Internet make the audience commodity ubiquitous and the factory not limited to your living room and your wage workplace

> – the factory is also in all in-between spaces, and the entire planet is today a capitalist factory.[103]

Today's capitalism is in deep crisis insofar as it increasingly relies on non-wage labour at the same time that it searches for new areas to exploit. As part of the exploitation of nature, we can now include the biogenetic substance of life itself. Such value production can be understood beyond wages but not beyond surplus-value creation and exploitation. Management gurus downplay exploitation by presenting digital media production as a blurring of the lines between work and leisure, and by associating social media activity with community, creativity, connectivity, sharing, cooperation and participation, and moreover, as inherently democratic and liberating.

According to Fuchs, critics of social media like Matteo Pasquinelli and Brett Caraway argue that the profit made by companies like Google is a form of rent. Fuchs disputes this argument insofar as it obfuscates categories of class and structures of ownership, and ignores the exploitation of labour time. And against those like David Hesmondhalgh who would say that unpaid activities cannot be exploited and that measuring user time would lead to the further expansion of commodification, Fuchs responds that it is too late to make this kind of argument for activities whose value is already appropriated. And against those like Adam Arvidsson, who argue that digital labour has no fixed price, Fuchs says that other forms of unpaid work, such as housework and slave work, are nevertheless areas of exploitation, especially where there is coercion.[104] The tendency to downplay the political economy of network capitalism is also encouraged by the idea that we live in an information society and knowledge economy, which contributes to confusion regarding the generation of value. Such "ordinary liberalism" as the free market advocates' fascination with new technologies ignores the processes of capital accumulation and the "lumpenization" of global populations.[105] Networks not only transform means and modes of production, Fuchs argues, but also relations of production, encouraging the generation of cooperative and communicative labour insofar as it is mediated by information technologies and creating tangible goods. Such changes to the productive forces of a society are necessary to the self-overcoming of the contradictions of capital and the reproduction of class relations. Although the development of the network society is part of a "conscious class project of the dominant class for advancing new strategies of capitalist accumulation," Fuchs adds that such notions as "informational capitalism" should not be seen as a totality, but rather as a way to describe the degree to which the capitalist economy is based on informational productive forces in its accumulation practices.[106] Informational value production exists alongside finance capitalism, energy extraction, telecommunications and other large-scale industries. In short, although the forces of production become increasingly informational and networked, the relations of production remain capitalist.

The network society, for Fuchs, inasmuch as it leads to increasing exploitation and precarity, deepens capitalist class structures. The alternative to this is class struggle, which can take many forms, from protests, strikes and occupations, the refusal of work and of consumption, to the creation of non-commercial platforms and commons-based social media that are controlled by all users. At this stage of his analysis Fuchs tends to resort to a "two sciences" type of discussion that was characteristic of Soviet policy, with bourgeois technologies on one side and proletarian technologies on the other, based on different regimes of ownership and control. However, as Bloois argues, the establishment of commons in the midst of the crises of neoliberalism is not a simple matter but can contribute to the further erosion of existing democratic institutions. The crisis is compounded by the lack of a common ideological and class horizon, wherein radical democrats and cultural studies scholars argue for the diversity and equivalence of struggles. In contrast to such postmodern relativism, the Occupy Wall Street movement made class antagonism and economic inequality the focus of its protests. The Occupy movement in fact created a number of alternative communication platforms that are collectively owned and controlled by activist users. This leads Fuchs to describe four positions on the role of social media in Occupy Wall Street: 1) a *technological determinism* that sees network society as all-encompassing and social media "Facebook revolutions" as being determined by viral flows of communication; against this Fuchs says that social media can be ignored by citizens or censored and monitored by governments; 2) a *social constructivism* that emphasizes the "social" in social movements and ignores technology; in this view technology operates at the expense of politics, as argued for instance in Dean's theory of communicative capitalism or Žižek's understanding of OWS as discontent with capitalism; 3) a *dualism* such as Mason's and Hardt and Negri's, where technological innovation dovetails with political and socio-economic crisis; this position ignores the exploitation of users by corporate communication companies and assumes that these are convertible into commons; and lastly, 4) a *dialectical view* that understands networked social media to be constituted by class struggle between dominant groups, state power and dominated working classes; social media are therefore contradictory and pose varying potentials with regard to politics, culture and ideology.[107]

As a final word on network ideology, I would question Fuchs's association of Žižek with social constructionism as opposed to dialectics. Although Žižek's writings on OWS and his speech at Zuccotti Park may not have emphasized social media technology, this does not mean that he has no position on the issue. In fact, Fuchs's refutation of technological determinism comes closest to what a Žižekian dialectics would propose. In this case Fuchs cites Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843), which states:

> For revolutions require a passive element, a material basis. Theory is fulfilled in a people only insofar as it is in the fulfillment of needs of that people. […] Will the theoretical needs be immediate practical needs? It is not enough for thought to strive for realization, reality itself must strive towards thought.[108]

Marx's view that the contradictions of reality must become subjective insights that motivate practices is consistent with a Žižekian perspective, even if there is no big Other. To take only one example, Thomas Brockelman, in discussing Žižek's ideas on technology, states that Žižek rejects the postmodern notion that reality is an artificial social construction. Žižek rather endorses the Heideggerian critique of modern science and Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental rationality. Without denying that contemporary cultural phenomena lead to greater objectification, Žižek insists that such deterministic materialisms as proposed by brain science, evolutionary science, artificial intelligence, and so on, allow for no sense of a transcendent outside from capitalist reality.[109] For Žižek, such apparent closure confronts us with our freedom:

> On a first approach, anxiety emerges where we are totally determined, objectivized, forced to assume that there is no freedom, that we are just neuronal puppets, self-deluded zombies; at a more radical level, however, anxiety arises when we are compelled to confront our freedom. (It is the same in Kant: when we are able to identify a pathological cause of an act of ours, this cannot but be a relief from the anxiety of freedom; or, as Kierkegaard would have put it, the true horror is to discover that we are immortal, that we have a higher Duty and responsibility – how much easier it would be to be a mere natural mechanism…) Consequently, cognitivist self-objectification causes anxiety because – although, in terms of its enunciated content, it "objectivizes" us – it has the opposite effect in terms of the implied position of enunciation: it confronts us with the abyss of our freedom, and simultaneously, with the radical contingency of the emergence of consciousness.[110]

This is no doubt why techno-utopianism is such a common response to the development of the network society, since the hyperreality of technology is directly connected to subjectivity and the sense of freedom. Whereas a thinker like Fuchs would see such freedom as a freedom to be fought for and achieved, a telos, Žižek perceives it as Real, a glitch in the system.

Critical Art Ensemble, *Egg*, 1997-98. Poster from *Flesh Machine*, a live performance project that simulates bio-class divisions in the flesh economy and the residues of eugenics in the reproductive technology market. Courtesy of CAE.

TWO

AGAINST CYBERNANTHROPY

The culture of the Internet is a culture made up of a technocratic belief in the progress of humans through technology, enacted by communities of hackers thriving on free and open technological creativity, embedded in virtual networks aimed at reinventing society, and materialized by money-driven entrepreneurs into the workings of the new economy.
– Manuel Castells

The integration of cybernetics into all aspects of life is a fact. The great values of the internet generation have been dashed to pieces: decentralization, peer-to-peer, rhizomes, networks.
– Geert Lovink

Possibly computer programs will be complex enough and computers fast enough that they might respond to us in ways that might pass the Turing test, but that's a low bar. We are easily fooled, as we know, because we do it to each other all the time. These talking computers will still be tools, and they won't be conscious in the way human brains are, nor in a good position to act in the world… The main thing to say here is, they're not the important thing; humans will still be deciding and making history, so we need to focus on that aspect of things. There will be no Singularity. We will remain the responsible parties when it comes to history.
– Kim Stanley Robinson

It would seem rash and futile in the networked society to take a position against technology. Yet, given the state of the world, it would be foolhardy to avoid the problem of technology. In postmodern academia, the death of the humanist subject and its replacement by social constructionist materialism appears to be a *fait accompli*. It would consequently seem equally foolish to look to the sixties and the romantic refusals at that time of the "the system" and its "organization men" for any way to move forward socially, culturally and politically. Yet there is a relation between that time period and our own that we often ignore. This is due in no small part to the success of Foucauldian discourse theory, which has extended exponentially into research on new subjectivities, new materialisms and end-of-History post-politics. It is worth revisiting in this regard Henri Lefebvre's book-length critique of Michel Foucault's 1966 magnum opus, *The Order of Things* (*Les mots et les choses*). Lefebvre's critique of the structuralist philosophy on which Foucault's work was premised questioned the cybernetic information systems of the period and the tendency towards scientifically rational forms of control. Like Foucault's anti-humanist discourse theory, cybernetics sought to purge the world of the illusions of subjectivity and replace these with what Lefebvre termed *cybernanthropy*. Published in 1967, Lefebvre's *Position: Contre les technocrates* (*Position: Against the Technocrats*) called for an end to the fiction of man-machine synthesis.[1] Lefebvre's book-length treatment of Foucault and of structuralism, which is one of many texts from his "anti-structuralist" period, has yet to be translated into English. This is perhaps understandable given the status of discourse theory in the last few decades as today's *lingua franca* of postmodern academia. However, Lefebvre's insights are worth re-examining today, especially in light of recent studies of the way that Foucault's work has both shaped contemporary thought but also stymied leftist politics. Revisting Lefebvre's *Position* allows us to perceive how networks have become one of today's more stupefying religiosities.

Technicity According to Lefebvre

The recent wave of anti-globalization protests, student protests and movement of the squares, and the rise of activism more generally, has given a great deal of attention to the Situationist International. Because Henri Lefebvre was the source of many Situationist ideas his theories of urban revolution have been well documented. Previous to his writings in spatial theory, however, Lefebvre pioneered Marxist studies. He was the first, along with Norbert Guterman, to translate Marx into French, the first to teach Marxism in a French university, and the principal philosopher of dialectical materialism.[2] In the 1930s and afterwards Lefebvre drew attention to the centrality of the theory of alienation in Marx's work and developed a novel approach to the concept of everyday

life, which is today acknowledged as Lefebvre's most significant contribution to critical theory.[3] After his break with the French Communist Party in 1956, Lefebvre pioneered rural sociology, theorized revolutionary romanticism, and became a leading luminary of the student movement in France. He later generated his more well-known scholarship on urbanism and spatial theory – the trialectics of space – which is today a methodological mainstay for much critical urban theory.[4] Although some of Lefebvre's writings through to the 1970s appeared in English, the translation of several of his texts in the 1990s spurred a good deal of attention as well as critique, whether in the field of radical geography or in postmodern and feminist criticism. By the 1990s, materialist scholars working with psychoanalysis, theories of cultural representation and theories of visuality presumed to have decentred the "politics of space" with a "politics of representation" and body-centred notions of becoming.[5]

Despite the inherent value of the work of radical geographers like Edward Soja, Mike Davis and David Harvey, even in light of its critique, the decentering of the politics of space by postmodern theorists was not effectively challenged until Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* and his debates with radical democracy theorist Ernesto Laclaus and queer theorist Judith Butler in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*.[6] One should not underestimate the extent to which Žižek's debunking of certain aspects of postmodernism gave legitimacy to the renewal of leftist critical theory. It is the appearance of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* in 2000, however, that became the primary reference for alterglobal activists.[7] This text not only explained the global reach of neoliberal capitalism but provided a Marxian analysis of the "immaterial" character of precarious labour in post-Fordist societies. By focusing on new social compositions in the contemporary global factory, *Empire* looked much further than the equally successful culture jamming ethos of Naomi Klein's *No Logo.*[8] The 2000s also saw the translation of the work of Alain Badiou into English.[9] Reacting more negatively to Badiou and Žižek than to the Foucault and Deleuze-influenced work of Italian autonomists, postmodern academia has been able to renew itself in part by combining its institutional inertia with the anarchist and horizontalist trend in social movements, which dovetails more easily with identity politics than does the work of Žižek and Badiou.

After the Iraq War and the 2008 economic crisis it has become safe if not fashionable to once again read Marx and to look to the radical legacy for alternatives to the postmodern endgame. Lefebvre becomes possible today for many reasons that were already in play among those Situationist-inspired artists and urban theorists of the 1980s. However, it is not very well-known that although Lefebvre did pay attention to the production of social space in relation to psychic forces, bodily practices and symbolic systems, he did not approach language and textuality, or politics for that matter, in the same way as most of his structuralist and postmodern contemporaries. Current

directions in social constructionism by and large rely on metalinguistic precepts that Lefebvre argued against. As he once remarked: "as for the revolution through writing and in language, what a mystification! What Parisian worldliness!"[10] But Lefebvre was no moralist either. His involvement with aesthetics was derived from a love for romantic artists such as Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Nietzsche, Robert Schumann, Novalis and Paul Éluard.[11] This led him to become an untiring critic of orthodox Marxism, and later, a defender of humanist Marxism and materialist dialectics, challenging the anti-humanist precepts of structuralism. Those who look into Lefebvre's more than sixty books, in particular the writings from the 1960s and 70s, will discover a rare critical voice on much twentieth-century French theory, with critiques of everyone from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, to Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan and Jula Kristeva. His stature as a Marxist is on a par with towering intellectual figures like Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Raymond Williams.

In taking lessons and borrowing concepts from Lefebvre, postmodernist cultural theory has attempted to leave behind many of the important questions that are only now resurfacing: an emphasis on universality and emancipation, a critical approach to realist epistemology, an understanding of the individual subject as an agent of historical transformation and an unorthodox Marxist praxis.[12] What concerns me here is only a fraction of Lefebvre's writings, which emerged after his work on rural and urban sociology and which led to his history of the Paris Commune that was part of his work on revolutionary romanticism, all of which influenced Guy Debord and the Situationists.[13] Some of the main texts from this period include *Introduction à la modernité* (1962), *La Proclammation de la Commune* (1965), *Le droit à la ville* (1968), *L'Irruption: de Nanterre au sommet* (1968) and *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne* (1968). All of these texts explore the question of culture and the conceptualization of *poësis*, the creation and appropriation of meaning and the world by subjects located in historico-social situations, which he sought to emphasize as a critical difference within debates on structuralism, information theory, linguistics, cybernetics and game theory. Lefebvre positioned himself against the dogmatic use of structuralism and sought to complicate it by addressing the complexity of human phenomena, the conjunctural and the contingent, and the open nature of social praxis. The texts just mentioned are therefore counterparts to his more polemical writings: *Métaphilosophie* (1965), *Le langage et la société* (1966), *Position: Contre les technocrates* (1967), *Le manifeste différentialiste* (1971), *Vers le cybernanthrope: contre les technocrates* (1971) and *L'Idéologie structuraliste* (1975). Our task today, according to Rob Shields, is to rediscover Lefebvre after Foucault, just as Lefebvre once said that after Marx we find Hegel.[14]

Lefebvre's polemic against Foucault and structuralism begins by associating technicity with the concept of everyday life, which in the 1940s Lefebvre had transformed from something that represents the banal, boring, domestic and insignificant, to instead represent something like the concept of lifeworld developed by Jürgen Habermas. Lefebvre's notion of everyday life, however, is broader than Habermas' idea in its dialectical interrelation with social totality. Technicity is distinct from technology and high tech in the sense that with technicity you also have the element of human motivation – the will to transform human nature by altering the material world. The French language provides the more useful distinction between *la technologie* and *la technique*, the latter of which implies the will to technology. Lefebvre nevertheless emphasizes the term *technicité* as a means to identify the way that *technique* is controlled by state bureaucracies and capitalist interests. Not all social technologies qualify equally in terms of progress and human development. Some in fact may represent mirages and regression. As well, the dialectic of enlightenment makes it such that the capitalist world that conditions technicity begets nefarious uses. For instance, the research that begins as space travel comes back to earth in the form of nuclear missiles. Technicity advances while human suffering is normalized and tolerated. The faith in technicity seems to surpass the ability of institutions to meet human needs: the automobile replaces public transit, destroying cities in the process and reducing the activity of living (dwelling) to a commodified function (housing). Insofar as social problems are acknowledged, Lefebvre argues, solutions are proposed by technocrats and delivered to the state power that chooses among them, not unlike the work of today's NGOs, lobbies and think tanks. However, beyond a certain threshold, the power of the technocrats is mostly illusory and society disintegrates into various forms of uneven development. Whereas Debord theorized the society of the spectacle, Lefebvre introduced the notion of a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption." This might seem questionable in the age of the "prosumer," but it is less so when one acknowledges how, on a world scale, the entire North American economy is based on the consumption of goods that are produced elsewhere in the global supply chain. After 9/11, the President of the United States called on citizens to do their patriotic duty and go shopping. Meanwhile the U.S. military went shopping for weapons, to date spending more than $5.6 trillion to perpetrate the 'War on Terror.' The unevenness produced by technicity enters consciousness insofar as people no longer understand the systems that control them. While the right wishes technocrats to be subordinated to outmoded ideals, like patriotism and nationalism, the left believes that technicity should be subject to public regulation.[15]

Technicity for Lefebvre is mythic, an ideology that he associated with the rise of structuralism in the human sciences. Technicity does three things: it closes society and blocks horizons with deterministic cybernetics; it threatens

this society by reducing everything to automatic functioning and a model of equilibrium; and, more optimistically, technicity allows for possibility, as long as it is invested in the everyday. Lefebvre gives the example of leisure time, a means to establish equilibrium with work life, a means of urban planning and spatial control, but also the transformation of life through rest and imagination. Programmed leisure, however, does not come from the everyday. It is a capture of the everyday by leisure. It provides satisfaction but it also creates malaise. The myths of technicity are dispelled over time, with experience and with the courage to transform everyday life. The contemporary products of technicity, from mobile phones to laptop computers and the Internet, are nothing that we need to celebrate nor deny. They mix fantasy with reality, but they also cause confusion and disappointment, creating for instance the simulacra of friendship and political change. The weak ties that are promoted by online communication, or the ridiculously easy group formations that can result, are what Lefebvre described as the new forms of poverty that characterize a bureaucratized world made into spectacle.[16] Everyday life comes to depend on those who supply the gadgets that organize the modes of consumption, the technocrats who assist in the liquidation of the humanism that resists.

To take up Lefebvre's retort, one would say that if we must go the way of networks, let us be lucid about it since substance is illusory and humanity is virtual. Yet networks operate under the logic of identity and the tendency towards integration. At every stage, struggles and conflicts are a wager on the possible and the impossible, where neither the self nor the collectivity can be easily encapsulated. Because cybernetics seeks closure, only practice diversifies, and only praxis gives a sense to diversification. But which praxis? Networks produce a new everyday, but networks are as uncertain as they are unconscious. Let technicity be invested in the everyday, Lefebvre says, but let it be a revolutionary proposition, both collective and individual, an imperfect combination as only the work of art proposes. Lefebvre's formula in this case is that subject is never "I" or "us," but always a passage from "I" to "we" and back.[17] Rather than destroy liberal bourgeois humanism, socialism proposes a revolutionary humanism, an open, dialectical and conflictual relation between reality and imagination. Neither has communist society or actually existing capitalism provided a formula for the unity of the singular and the universal. Neither one can.

What neoliberal capitalism offers, both on the left and the right, is singularities, becomings without a sense of human becoming, without utopia and programme. Technicity offers mostly programming: computer algorithms and the administration of culture, corporate state planning and public administration. For Lefebvre, all of this is encapsulated in structuralist ideology. The modus operandi of structuralism is metalanguage, a second degree discourse that focuses on codes and signals. The self-referential replaces the referential.

The textual replaces the practico-sensible. Language refers to language and discourse to discourse. Revolutionary language for instance is transformed into revolutionary metalanguage and institutionalized Marxism, to which Lefebvre gives the name of Althusser. After Althusser, revolution becomes a myth and a nostalgia, a series of metaphors and rhetoric, or a project for the technocracy. Against this nihilism, Lefebvre proposes that we discover the critique of everyday life. Change the world! If humanism is dead, as the structuralists say, should we not demand a Ministry of the Everyday, seeking the perfect supply of the everyday according to demand?[18] When the state abandons Marxism, how can technicity be anything but programming according to the norms of capitalist restructuring? The progress of society lags behind the diversification of the forms of exploitation. This is the terrorism that today's politicians do not speak about. From Sarkozy, Hollande and Macron to Merkel, from Obama to Clinton and Trump, to Erdogan, Poroshenko and Putin, there is no alternative it seems to the "democratic terror" that validates security and surveillance.[19] Our notions of revolution and emancipation are consequently defined by this permanent state of fear-mongering and logic of victimization. That, for Lefebvre, is the result of the triumph of cybernetics. What does Obama propose that is different from Bush? What does Clinton propose that is different from Trump? There is no movement except in mobile technologies. You can take your laptop to the coffee shop. There is movement for immigrants and refugees from economic, political and environmental catastrophe. This is no longer the image of a cybernetic city, as proposed by Baron Haussmann, or a building as machine, as proposed by Le Corbusier; it is a cyberneticized planet. What image of the future does it propose, other than Armageddon?

Lefebvre argues that the problems of structuralism can be found in ancient philosophy, in the debates between partisans of identity and partisans of dialectics, siding with Marx's emphasis on becoming *over* system and not within it, an inexhaustible non-integrated becoming and faith in revolution. But revolution is absorbed by the creations and determinisms of technocrats. What remains is a fundamental historicity, the self-creation of humanity as defined by historical materialism. How do networks fit into this process of self-creation? What contradictions do we find there, what forms of human becoming, development or progress? Reading Lefebvre's *Position* produces certain ironies, for example when he says that today's machines function according to numbers and asks whether we are going to put all of the world – individuals, groups and insect species – onto perforated cards![20] But then he seems merely descriptive when he writes:

> If the notion of systems arises to the foreground of theory, it is because on all sides everything is being systematized, determining expandable social yet invariable systems, stipulating orders,

> norms and rules, fixing models and organizing self-regulating feedback mechanisms.[21]

Systems theories and structuralisms are looking for an ideology that can make up for the gaps in the system. Again, reading Lefebvre today makes us laugh when he compares the taste for structuralism to the fashion in mini-skirts. But what have we done to replace it?

Systems are not unlike like networks, a combination of practical and pure theory, an ensemble of relations that hold together and maintain themselves despite the people and things they bring together. Such systems of knowledge, or structures, based on linguistics or anthropology, precede thinking because they seemingly precede subjects. They are anonymous yet fully determined and determining, an absolute background that pretends to be concerned with human relations and politics. And there is no way out, apparently, according to Foucault's *The Order of Things* and its concept of *episteme*, which announces the disappearance of the human "like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea" – that is, rather than the withering of the state.[22] What is Foucault's achievement if not the attempt to make Marxism obsolete? Lefebvre argues that the formal unity and systemic coherence that one finds in Foucault's work is a theory of cybernetics translated into an apologia for the ensemble of determining laws and repressive norms that Foucault carefully describes. System provides the computational data that renders human existence. It leaves out contradictions, the everyday, human character and individuality, happiness as well as sadness, in favour of technique, and packaged, Lefebvre says, as "knowledge" devoted to nothing but its own emptiness. Such tautological technicity should be denounced from the left, he says, as a tourniquet of sorrow and subjugation.[23]

Against Foucault's citation of Samuel Beckett, who asked "What does it matter who is speaking?," Lefebvre begins his critique of Foucault by emphasizing human speech. Who speaks? What does one speak? What is the relationship between language, reality and system? In discourse theory, defined by Lefebvre as structuralist ideology, linguistics presumably surpasses sociology, psychology and political economy as a more formal and more systematic model of the world. This is a postulate that Lefebvre accepts only partially. The second, unacceptable postulate is that language, in its relation to the real, eliminates mere appearances, such as subjectivity, experience or the sacred. Mental structures are not reducible to language as a prison house and transcendent system of signifiers. If they do, it is only insofar as cybernetics replace lacunae with rigorous systematicity and transparency, which is somehow directly accessible to the structuralist-historicist. The true point of reflexivity is that this ideology is the ideology of the new technocratic class of the 1960s and of the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption. Discourse theory

thus provided consumer society with its strongest ideology. From the point of view of the neoliberal university, the truths of the world are deviations from the "production of knowledge." What appears as discourse is always the discourse of actually existing society, a metalanguage fetishized in the idea of the network as the model for research and discovery. From this model we pass to the real without difficulty.[24] Networks coincide, ipso facto, with the new forces and relations of production, shifting from emancipation to immanence. Historicity is extinguished by structure.

Is there an epistemology of the new metalanguage of networks? We could ask the same questions of networks that Lefebvre asked of structuralism. Does it say something new or is it redundant? The *first question* in a series of questions is who speaks? Speech acknowledges the expressive function. It is the question of subject and intention, which brings into analysis psychology, sociology, history and memory. Speaking is never fully transparent. It designates substitutions and varies according to situations. It is open and closed, with changing meanings. The subject as such can never be a mere effect of discourse, revealing the symbolic order or a positive unconscious. So much would seem to both confirm and go against the prevailing dogmas of postmodernism. In relation to what can only be described as today's academic common sense, Darin Barney states the following:

> Perhaps the closest connection between theories of post-modernism and the network society thesis arises in the context of anti-essentialist conceptions of human identity. Just as postmodernists reject fixed foundations for truth and stable, objective grounds for claims about reality, so too do they question the premise that there is a relatively stable, coherent, unified centre – whether spiritual or biological – which comprises the essence of selfhood and from which human identity directly emerges. Identities, like truth and reality, are constructed through discourse. They are thus built upon shifting relationships and networks of power, expressed in language practices using the materials provided by, and appropriated in, distinct social, cultural and political configurations.[25]

This is fine insofar as neither politics nor psychoanalysis require an essentialist notion of self. But how does such postmodern epistemology translate into politics? The radical democracy that is based on Derridean deconstruction and that advocates the plurality of differences tends, according to Žižek, to also accept and naturalize capitalism.[26] As Žižek argues, there is no simple passage from the idea that people were previously stupid essentialists while now they understand that identities are performed. One needs a metanarrative of

this shift, usually the Foucauldian idea of a shift in the predominant *episteme*, which presupposes the totality of capitalism as the background against which we can assess the emergence of shifting identities.[27]

Lefebvre's anti-orthodox humanist Marxism is perfectly compatible with Žižek's Lacanian view that there is no inexorable telos to human becoming. The question then is does the network society presuppose a philosophy of history or a conception of social struggle? Wu Ming provides an account of the Arab Spring that disputes the "technophilic narratives" that make the disruptions of everyday life seem less disturbing:

> If we say that in Tunisia a 'Twitter Revolution' is going on, we feel more comfortable than we might feel hearing of a hard revolt, far from our standards, with people burning themselves alive or rebelling against the price of bread and olive oil for frying food. […] Twitter and Facebook are in a sense, the twenty-first century 'Lawrence of Arabia': an emphasis on social networks gives us the feeling that these riots are a by-product of the Internet, the quintessentially democratic and participatory tool, which itself is a product of the West. Thus, we say, if Egypt has rebelled thanks to the Internet, then it has rebelled thanks to us, and so we tend to forget that the symbolic place of that rebellion is not cyberspace: it is a city square, because overthrowing a despot via Twitter is not that simple: first, because access to the Internet can be blocked, and at a certain point it was, and secondly because even dictators lurk on social networking sites.[28]

Nowhere was this contradiction more obvious than in the use of social media by the jihadi group ISIS, using Tweets and popular hashtags, and releasing videos of its war crimes as means of propaganda and recruitment. The corresponding strategy is cybersecurity, which for the most part disavows class struggle by focusing on the terrorist threat that is otherwise created and fueled by global capitalism and militarism. For Barney, this implies that a social constructionist view of network technologies that is focused on the contingency and heterogeneity of outcomes may be beneficial in terms of avoiding the problems of technological determinism, but may also, he says, "risk descent into a political and amoral relativism."[29] I would simply add that this applies also to the question of the heterogeneity of identities.

What common sense, if any, does the blogosphere or the Twitterverse presuppose? What does online anonymity, such as that promoted by Anonymous and WikiLeaks, imply as a common ideological horizon? Who speaks through such collective phantoms? According to Brian Holmes, *networkers*, the millions

of flex workers in the global knowledge-space, have seized the Internet as a means to collective autonomy, if only they could organize cooperation instead of intensified control.[30] One potential problem here is the extent to which discourse theory and the presumption of a pre-individual linguistic impersonality is used to describe and understand political struggle. Marx long ago defined cooperation as one of the distinct features of efficiency in the capitalist mode of production.[31] Moreover, according to Fuchs, many who focus on the exploitation of communication and cooperation at work forget that both communication and cooperation *are* work, like any other productive activity. One presumes that collective net phantoms are the unemployed and unpaid equivalent to the happy workers of Socialist Realism.[32] According to Gabriella Coleman, collective phantoms like Anonymous are at best erudite Internet denizens, even if at times it is hard to know for sure if they are principled dissidents since "Anonymous has no consistent philosophy or political program."[33] It is less anonymous groups like the Zapatistas and Occupy Wall Street that are able to initiate a collective subject of intention and a universalist intervention in the political field.

The *second question* asked by Lefebvre addresses the phatic function; for instance, saying hello. Who or what is being addressed in this? Is the transference conscious or unconscious, spontaneous or repressed? Žižek associated the undirected riots in the French *banlieues* in 2005 as an example of phatic communication.[34] The *third question* is the conative function, which is oriented to a known addressee, but whose goal is sometimes unknown. The *fourth question* is the referential, or cognitive function, which focuses on the matter at hand and the things of the world, an activity that appeals to common sense. *Fifth*, the metalinguistic function is focused on code and is immanent to discourse. The network, for example, as an instance of code or metalanguage, produces other, competing sub-networks. Lastly, the *sixth question* is the poetic function, which means to create something with someone else, whether real or virtual.

All of these questions coexist and represent the contest between metadiscourse and referential speech. One can see this coexistence of functions in the rhetoric of networks, which were hitherto described as groups, social classes or social formations. Is the concept of networks merely a gloss or does it reveal something new? Is it a tautology taken as plenitude? What are its ideologies, codes and references? How does it relate to the everyday? How does it relate to commodity relations? Does it constitute a more rigorous knowledge? How do networks relate to relations of production and property? How do they relate to the body? Does the ideology of networks, like that of structuralism, seek to bring systems to the point where power coincides with knowledge, an enclosure rather than an emancipation, a mastery of the forms of social co-existence, privileging stasis and equilibrium over change – or stasis within constant change? Is this not what is meant by creativity and innovation today – the

ability to maintain certain levels of economic productivity? What kind of affect does one produce when one creates for the sake of exchange? Is it easier and seemingly more pragmatic to think in terms of basic bread and butter issues? Culture is produced to consolidate or create what kind of society? Are networks a production or a consumption model of work? Are networks the new form of advertising or a channeling of human experience? The working class had an ideology of work and emancipation from work. Networks have an ideology of the integration of work into technicity and consumption. Networks are a dominant category of analysis today, shifting the forms of labour around durable consumer goods and industry to that of services and multi-user software, yet they are nevertheless insufficient to explain everything.

Lefebvre argued that the working class could never go back to the ideology of labour. However, what does networking offer the precarious prosumer that class analysis does not? Against a monolithic and dogmatic notion of network as system, Lefebvre proposes the notion of *level* as a critique that disrupts any sense of unity or totality. He gives as an example the way that language is divided between the lower level of phonemes (letters, sounds, sonority) and the higher level of morphemes (words, phrases, sentences). This second level is itself divided between the meanings it creates and the environment in which it makes sense. One can think for instance of the networked communications that lead to the performance of a flash mob happening. The formal level breaks down into time, place and the action to be performed. The level of sense, however, allows for oppositional meanings and the referential significance of each enunciation, despite the pretence to swarm-like behaviour. The flash mob requires a common code of action but the enactment of the code is not itself a code because it is inseparable from sense as well as nonsense. The same goes for any network structure. Because speech is not systematizable, the greater tendency to unicity within a network will lower the horizon of sense and historicity there is for its participants. This is why metalanguage acts mostly as an evasion of metapolitics.

What was supposed to be a tool with which to question common sense is today wielded as a blunt instrument to attack sense. Network theory, like other forms of systems thinking, has a tendency to promote an ontology of system, which to be valid as knowledge merely requires that one observe empirical reality. This is taken by humanities scholars as science – designed to be "empowering" for students – despite the fact that observation masks different levels of meaning for even the agents themselves, between economic and social contradictions, dreams of happiness, lifestyle and intimacy, institutional meanings and protocols, symbolic practices, ideologies of progress, property regimes, human rights, individual and social imaginaries. Like discourse theory, network theory is concerned with establishing limits. Why, Lefebvre asks, should knowledge be concerned with limits and with the shift away from emancipation, if not to legitimize the limits of discourse theory itself?[35]

The concept of networks should be rejected as a privileged point of limitation. Post-Fordist societies are not closed, but far more fluid and incoherent that any that came before. On the other hand they are also more closed insofar as they produce incoherence. Is the network model the best means to grasp the changing possibilities and needs of society or simply a way to show limits? And what of knowledge? There are now so many ways in academia to proclaim the end of ideological humanism: discursive historicism, scientific naturalism, brain science, evolutionary theory, new age spiritualism and buddhism, not to mention the more conjectural animal studies and post-human studies.[36] How many of these so-called materialisms maintain a relation to common sense and lived experience, Lefebvre asks, or to relations of production and social class? "Soon everyone says anything. In particular, the philosopher."[37] More than three decades later Giorgio Agamben gave us the name for this new speech function: whatever singularity.[38] Technicity seeks coherence and systematicity, with each becoming an end and a means for the other. Whereas discourse theory uses language and linguistics to understand the status of society, the purpose of knowledge is to understand the status of language in society as a work of society. We could say the same for networks as Lefebvre says about Foucault's notion of *episteme*: if there was such a thing as a network we might never escape it, but nor could we enter it, nor could we know it. If networks exist at all they imply a double critique, internal and external. To understand networks is not to impose a violent systematization, nor is it to reveal a secret code. Society is otherwise reduced to the transparency of the network, bringing the living project of humanity to its total completion.

Against the perfection of the system is the simple task of critique, which reintroduces the living dynamic of sense and of events. Such events do not reinscribe the dominant order by eliminating the project of humanity, but bring with them thought, political action and consciousness.[39] The knowledge that events bring about has not been pre-digested and catalogued under the concept of *episteme*. Between acquired knowledge and what lies ahead – creation, discovery – is a refutation of system. We cannot be traversed by the positive order of knowledge and also create new ideas. This order instead overlaps with lacunae, gaps and inconsistencies. The system of reification otherwise endorses networks because networks introduce into the productive process new kinds of commodities, new services or new protocols of digital labour. There where commodification reigns, Lefebvre says, is where consciousness knows itself as the place of the unconscious. The creative no-collar staff attempts to wake up from these relations of production with a dose of 'Gangnam Style' or even a secret code word: NSFW. Such efforts to go AWOL erase the traces of alienation and recuperate the feeling and consciousness of alienation as distractions and pointless revolts. One company, Telentica, understands fully the corporate logic of YouTube memes and uses an office party to advertise its cool products

and cool staff.[40] For those who do not have cool jobs or workplaces, there is the equivalent in the form of Zombie Walks. Where does creative freedom come into play? How does the conformism of such non-events relate to the relations of force between groups and classes?[41]

Theoretical struggle, Lefebvre says, must be against integration, homogeneity and massification, which reduce the differences between groups in the name of uniformity.[42] From his analysis of groups we could potentially take away some further insights into the critique of networks. In the 1960s, theorists of groups, he says, believed they had discovered a path to the transformation of life. Group life was opposed to bureaucracy and institutions and was believed to put an end to social fragmentation and alienation. Through group activity and teamwork, the individual was said to regain life and meaning. To extrapolate: "For such theorists, the [*network*] seems simultaneously the means and end of a metamorphosis that can gradually win the totality of social relations and even bring about historical revolutions."[43]

In response to the theory of groups, Lefebvre raises seven issues. *First*, the diversity of kinds of groups does not allow all of them to be treated with the same psycho-sociology. Although group psychology pretends to bring rigour to the analysis of groups, its insights are occasional and its experimental models are not real groups, whose real-life discontinuities have real-life social references. Micro-sociology cannot be separated from broader questions like capitalist competition, capitalist destructuration, the rhetoric of commodities, state ideology and forms of resistance. *Secondly*, micro-studies of groups confuse the end for the means and the means for the end, borrowing from Marxism the notion of "autonomization." Such group ideology seeks to bring about a praxis that is bereft of strategy with regard to other groups. Short of elucidating the situation, it becomes an end in itself. *Third*, it is difficult if not impossible to pass from test groups to real, historical groupings like the Paris Commune, for instance, without making a theoretical (political) leap. For the observer, a revolution appears like a utopia and does not stimulate action or the imagination. One thinks here of the Dismaland Bemusement Park, the dystopian parody of Disneyland. The colonial ideal of the mid-nineteenth-century Crystal Palace, an artificial microcosm of the world, leads through André Waterkeyn's Atomium and Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes to the idea of Spaceship Earth, now in some need of repair.[44] *Fourth*, the theory and practice of groups eludes the global, the totality of history and society. One can neither ascend from the local to the global, nor descend from the abstract totality to the parts. Socialism in one country? Protectionism? As Jodi Dean puts it: "Goldman Sachs doesn't care if you raise chickens."[45] *Fifth*, the organization of groups threatens them with disintegration. Can roles and group dynamics overcome the gap between the particular and the totality? Groups cannot unify history. Alienation and negativity enter the process. *Sixth*, praxis does not come from

equivocal undertakings. The life of real groups, for example a self-managed enterprise, can be oriented towards a critique of institutions. Their findings are then co-opted by a larger sphere. *Seventh*, the existence of groups tends to emphasize interpersonal relations, even when broad social referents are at play. The level of theoretical consciousness must constantly be repeated and revised. Other than alterity and interdependence, one finds material, social and scientific techniques, the infrastructure of specific groups, and the time and space required to create a work.[46]

Beyond these issues, Lefebvre argues that a dense network of groups – or group of social movement networks – is indispensable as agents of the possible who practice self-management and self-determination as catalysts of social praxis. He writes: "Only active groups, cemented by more or less large interests, by the common preoccupations of their members and even by ideologies, can together demand in an imperious way the equipments that are reached by technicity and use them."[47] Only this, he says, can prevent democracy from falling under the power of the technocrats, who use the techniques of massification against the masses by according everyday life only the minimum of technicity: the smartwatch rather than, say, the smart car; backdoor encryption rather than net neutrality. As an example of such paucity of social imagination, Benjamin Peters describes how Soviet cyberneticists attempted in the 1960s to develop a "unified information network" comparable to ARPANET – the OGAS All-State Automated System – but failed due to technocratic mismanagement that had nothing to do with either capitalist or socialist ideology, but was simply due to competition among self-interested institutional groups and actors. Against Bruno Latour's axiom that "technology is society made durable," Peters counters that "society is technology made temporary."[48] In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells asserts in contrast that "technology *is* society."[49] To think like Castells is to presume that political ideas are expressions of their social conditions. In a related manner, Lovink asks: "What could peer-to-peer solidarity look like?"[50]

Lefebvre reflects on the problems of the left in the context of technocracy. Political orthodoxy is detached from lived experience and small groups focus narrowly on themselves and interrogate their own members. Rigour becomes tautology and the group becomes a constraint. The economic miracles announced in Italy, Germany, Spain and France in the 1960s curiously produced new splinter groups. The large-scale political parties seemed like dinosaurs but the *groupuscules* were filled with ill-mannered intellectuals, prone to rivalries and exclusions. Like Stalinists, he says, they destroy honesty and friendship under the pretext of political efficacy: "It is enough to say how difficult it is to envisage the elaboration of a programme and a strategy of action with the intellectual neurotics that abound in such sects. I have in mind among others the situationist group and its journal: *L'Internationale Situationniste*."[51]

Whereas the left used to attack the conspicuous consumption of automobiles and refrigerators, it now attacks communicative capitalism, "the strange convergence of democracy and capitalism in networked communications and entertainment media."[52] Such all-encompassing critique reflects the new complexities of life and the reorganization of labour and production through de-industrialization. As the left shifted in the 1960s from a focus on work and production to that of consumption, it failed to put forward a new programme. Leftist parties came to believe they were the progressive wing of the technocracy. They promoted economic growth through planning and nationalization and pretended to have mastered markets, money and the law of value. Whereas the post-industrial technocrats of Lefebvre's era promoted leisure as a means to address the needs of everyday life, the revolutionary programme he argues is to transform everyday life and with it all of society. This is not a matter of ontology but a questioning of the totality. It is not a futurology, but a dialectical strategy since, at present, what is a progressive opening today is a capitalist market tomorrow.

Lefebvre's enemies were not the Situationists, however, but he doubted that an event like the Paris Commune would be possible a second time – not in the age of systems, and not on the basis of sectarianism. This led him to his battle horse against cybernetic integration, his critique of the new species of the *cybernanthrope*. A new species, he says, is growing around us, and perhaps even inside us. It is possible that this new species will replace humanity. This will happen, certainly, if humanity has given up on itself. Lefebvre proposes three models of the cybernanthrope. The first is encountered in fashion, when everybody says and does the same thing and finds satisfaction in following suit. The second, more complex, is the obsession with the transparency of communication, which seeks to evade the illusions of subjectivity. It eliminates partisan consciousness and replaces it with information, codes and signals. The theorists of structure, for instance, forget that communication is never only effectuated by discourse, but also by voice, gesture and facial expressions. Transparency throws these back at you as a way to avoid ambiguity, to avoid dialogue, music, dance, architecture and the city. It is not the law of truths but of communicability. Speech is equated with fixity through discourse, with capture by the network. The third model extends the latter in a proliferation of fields of expertise and institutions that are able to communicate their findings with one another, each of them reaching for metalanguage, the big synthesis.

The cybernanthrope is not a robot, but the robot is the product of the cybernanthrope: it is his image reflected back to him. Confusedly, the cybernanthrope wonders if his brain is not a computer. The distinction between first and second order cybernetics does not alter this basic question. Lefebvre is optimistic in this regard insofar as humans are not perfect feedback systems but are inherently flawed, weak, unconscious, unstable, dysfunctional, forgetful,

emotional, anxious, suffering, mortal, spontaneous and creative. In contrast, the cybernanthrope seeks homeostasis and equilibrium. However, as a "superior" species, the cybernanthrope is not unidimensional. He is not rigid, but supple. He is not formal but casual and relaxed. He is intelligent, calculated, assured, economical, with it, bemused and composed – a complex organism obeying simple laws of moderation and reaching for satisfaction via consumption. Like the various forces of efficiency and planned obsolescence that are at work in flims like Jacques Tati's *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (1953), William Klein's *The Model Couple* (1977) or Hal Hartley's *Trust* (1990), the cybernanthrope is concerned to improve everyday life by reducing love, joy, passion and art, replacing these with sex, satisfaction, consumption, gadgets, prototypes and structures.

The level of difficulty is that one does not know who is or is not a cybernanthrope. The cybernanthrope herself does not know. The cybernanthrope has no distinct class status. He or she can be a player or an errorist, an analysand or a *bon vivant*. He seems erudite and affectionate. He can be a hippie or a yuppie. He can be marginal, immoral or vicious. He will even encourage conflicts if they otherwise dissimulate more pressing contradictions. All told, however, he does not think that the current conditions can be overcome.[53] That is his alibi. His mission is to legitimize the existing materialism and morality. This is why the situation that Lefebvre described in 1967 is today the situation of post-politics and the conditions of neoliberal governance, the idea that we are all networked Fukuyamans now. We can see this today as neoliberals raise the spectre of regressive nativism in a desperate attempt to mask the consequences of their free trade policies, now adding trade sanctions and gunboat diplomacy to structural adjustment.

From Biopower to Cyberpower

Fifty years after Lefebvre's critique of cybernanthropy we have come under the sway of a new order of technocracy and its various facets: international trade regimes and free trade zones, liberalization of capital flows, transnational production chains and labour pools, foreign direct investment and deregulated banking. The complements to this global political economy that was put in place in the late 1970s includes the looming environmental challenge of global warming, neocolonial imperialist wars, a new Cold War against Russia, China and North Korea, security regimes and mass surveillance, economic austerity, privatization of services, structural adjustment, economic inequality, unemployment and mass incarceration – in short, a war by moneyed interests against the vestiges of twentieth-century political democracy, the welfare state and socialism. Lefebvre's cybernanthrope emerged as the neoliberal. The shift by activists and intellectuals towards the cybernetics of discourse theory and

networks, however, has made it all the more difficult to avoid the political and social influence of cybernanthropy. The situation is such that it is often difficult today to distinguish a discourse theorist from a neoliberal.

In the late 1970s Foucault delivered at the Collège de France the lectures that would come to be known as "The Birth of Biopolitics": his 1977-1978 lectures, published as *Security, Population, and Territory*, and his 1978-1979 lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.[54] It would be wrong to directly identify Foucault with neoliberalism and neoliberal ideology without taking into account both the social context in which he lived and perhaps, more importantly, his intellectual rationale for why neoliberal theories could be relevant to his study of the modern forms of power. In their collection of essays, which was first published in French as *Critiquer Foucault: Les années 1980 et la tentation néolibérale*, editors Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent offer an insightful account of how it is that a former "fellow traveler" of the French Communist Party and Maoism could turn out, in later life, to become an advocate of the ideas of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman.[55]

The context for Foucault's work at this time is the disillusionment of the left after the failures of the May 68 uprising to lead to any tangible social benefits. The destruction of the Bretton Woods financial system in 1971 and the economic crisis of 1973 that was spawned by OPEC oil prices led to a period of inflation, stagflation and low growth. This situation cast suspicion on the Keynesian policies that had previously created the postwar era of high employment and rising living standards. By the 1980s, the state, political parties, class struggle, labour unions, social security and wealth distribution began to be perceived as outmoded. Libertarian ideals and the association of Marxist communism with totalitarianism and the Gulag gave way to neoliberal attacks on the welfare state. Postmodernist intellectuals wondered to themselves: why save western civilization when instead you can destroy it? Meanwhile, in an attack on nanny state "dirigisme," neoliberals were appointed to prominent posts, first in France and then in England and the United States. Their task was to replace state intervention with market mechanisms.

As Michael Scott Christofferson notes, Foucault endorsed neoliberalism in the late 1970s as part of a more general acceptance of the ideas of *nouveaux philosophes* like André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévi. Influenced by the work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Glucksmann linked Marxism and post-68 transformative revolutionary politics to the Soviet Gulag. He considered Marxism to be consistent with all of western science and held up human rights as the only remaining hope for human progress, thereby leading the left towards liberal politics. As Glucksmann's work was influenced by Foucault's writings, in particular *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and as it was in some ways consistent with Foucault's understanding of power, Foucault lent him his public support. For Glucksmann, the normalizing

reason of state power leads inexorably to concentration camps and genocides. Revolution is nothing but a state project designed to dominate the 'plebs.' Foucault, in contrast, did not reject reason and did not think that the plebian class is without power, only more diffuse and less sovereign. Christofferson suggests that Foucault supported the *nouveaux philosophes* as a way to increase his celebrity, that is, after the publication of *The Order of Things* had made him a leading intellectual.[56] What appealed to Foucault in Glucksmann's work was the stance it was taking against Marxism. Christofferson notes that according to Eric Paras, Foucault's writings had never used the words "capitalism" and "proletariat" until 1970. While Foucault was attracted to Marxism for a while in the late 1960s, by 1972 he abandoned it and worked instead on the anti-representational and subaltern politics of the *Groupe d'information sur les prisons* (GIP) and on the notion of the "specific intellectual." By 1975 and 1976 Foucault became outwardly hostile towards Marxism and communism, a process that led Deleuze to distance himself from him. Foucault's notion of popular resistance was associated with a subaltern "lumpenproletariat," which, as a matter of essence, was thought to escape relations of power.

Foucault's antipathy towards the French Communist Party would in the 1970s be directed against the state socialist programme of the Union of the Left, comprised of the Socialist Party and the PCF. He was attracted instead to the so-called "Second Left" and its "anti-totalitarian" platform of self-management. Opposition to the old left, in this context, celebrated individual freedom and was more consistent with the ideals of the *soixante-huitards*. Young economists like Henri Lepage promoted "scientific" liberalism among the ranks of the new technocratic class of civil servants and economists. The now anti-statist socialists associated with the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) and French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) adopted the anti-*dirigisme* of the liberals. Second Left intellectuals like Pierre Rosanvallon, who directly influenced Foucault, tied the remains of *autogestionnaire* self-management, which was promoted as an alternative rather than a complement to social security, to the destinies of capitalism.

The problems one might associate with Foucault's adoption of neoliberal ideas are therefore the problems of the entire left in the 1980s and to this day. Christofferson argues that because Foucault allowed himself at this time to be guided by his hostility to communism, he reformulated the question of power in terms of discipline and discourse rather than state sovereignty. Revolutionary power is focused on political sovereignty. According to Foucault, because power is diffuse rather than simply repressive it cannot be limited to institutional disciplinary power, which must also be challenged. This shift in perspective, Christofferson contends, allowed Foucault to maintain a sense of anarchistic criticality and political conviction. Insurrections would not be those of armed struggle but of new knowledges. Foucault's association of Soviet Stalinism with

bourgeois forms of disciplinary power coincides in this sense with Jacques Rancière's more recent effort to distinguish politics from police powers.

The problem with the idea of disciplinary power that Foucault had developed up to the mid-1970s was that it did not allow for new political avenues beyond the old left. How then to conceive power without reference to the state? It is in this context that Foucault introduced the concept of "biopower" at the Collège de France in his 1975-76 lectures, *Il faut défendre la société*.[57] In contrast to his earlier "disciplinary hypothesis" from *Discipline and Punish*, which looks at how subjects are disciplined and normalized through schools, the military, hospitals and prisons, Foucault began to perceive in modernity, emerging in the nineteenth century, a different form of power that does not have discipline as its main basis. He described "biopower" as a "non-disciplinary" "technology of power" that operates at the level of populations rather than directly on individuals. Its purpose is to extend and enhance life. This would include, for instance, social security, public safety, public health, overall human productivity and economic prosperity. Christofferson notes Foucault's failure in these lectures to say anything of great significance or accuracy regarding state socialism, why it is that states allow mass atrocities, or the significant differences between different kinds of states, from democratic to dictatorial regimes. Nor does Foucault address those institutions, laws and human rights charters that protect people from the abuses of state power.

Instead of endorsing Foucault, the *nouveaux philosophes* might have rather looked to Lefebvre's publication in 1975 of the three volume work *De L'État* and his analysis of the links between the state and capitalism, how its principles of equivalence and equilibrium mask the contradictions of the forces of production and how the bourgeois state vacillates between liberalism and authoritarianism. According to Lefebvre, the state control of the economy was eventually replaced by the autonomy of the economy and technique, both of which were linked to a new state mode of production, an ideology of growth and knowledge production. This path was not taken by French intellectuals at that time or in the following era.[58]

What connects Foucault's later work on biopower to his earlier work on discourse and episteme is his philosophical anti-humanism. According to Behrent, Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France are characterized by a singular focus on economic liberalism rather than philosophical liberalism.[59] Whereas emancipatory political liberalism focuses on government and (natural) law as the basis for human freedom, economic liberalism, associated at that time with German Ordoliberlism and the Chicago School of economics, puts its faith in the free market, which Foucault came to accept as a new basis for individual autonomy and self-determination, and which supported his suspicion of the state. The anti-humanist thrust of this view is that the power of a sovereign state is too often anthropomorphized as the expression of a

human will. According to Behrent, "[t]he theoretical condition of possibility of Foucault's neoliberal moment was his insight that economic liberalism is, essentially, a liberation without humanism."[60] The irony of Foucault's stance, then, is that one needs to take the human out of the question of (cybernetic) power so that one can then propose conditions that would allow for more human freedom. In words that echo Lefebvre's concept of the cybernanthrope, these conditions of biopower are forms of administration that seek to optimize "states of equilibrium [and] regularity" within the population.[61] More accurately, humans are to be reconceived as human capital. Foucault's intellectual gymnastics allowed his work to eclipse the humanist Marxism of his leftist contemporaries, including Sartre, Lefebvre, Adorno and Marcuse. The crux of his adoption of neoliberalism is the postulate that, in its quest for efficiency and productivity, laissez-faire liberalism has an interest in limiting state power, a concept to which Foucault gave the name "governmentality."

Foucault's approach to neoliberalism as a governmental regime does not associate it directly with biopower since it is ostensibly opposed to governing too much, a reticence that extends to human rights law. Freedom becomes a utilitarian principle of administration rather than a right. Freedom for Foucault does not inhere in natural law nor in the power of the people. People can therefore renounce social justice collectivism in favour of competition as an "anti-foundational" and "non-metaphysical" market principle. Shorn of any humanistic archaism, the free market was to define the limited function of the state. Around 1979, Foucault approved of specific neoliberal policies on taxation, poverty reduction and crime reduction as being less disciplinary, less bureaucratic and as a possibly non-disciplinary direction for society.

Although Foucault's writings on neoliberalism only began to be understood outside of France after the translation of his late 1970s lectures in the 1990s, the success of his work, outside of governmentality studies, has largely been due to its emphasis on struggles against normalization, which has been adapted in various ways by identity struggles, from feminism to post-colonialism and queer theory. While this may have advanced civil rights within a broader democratic project, there have been some unfortunate consequences for the left, in part, as Jean-Loup Amselle puts it, because the focus on identities is not a politics and also because it harmonizes perfectly with neoliberalism.[62] The redistribution of power promoted by Foucault has also accompanied the redistribution of wealth into the coffers of the ruling class. Foucault could endorse the shift to specific struggles because he believed that neoliberalism would usher in greater self-determination for people and freedom from state interference. Beyond identity politics and civil rights struggles, he glamourized what he perceived as the delinquency, crime and violence of the plebians, the lumpenproletariat, marginals and youth gangs. Although he sided with these classes of excluded people, his view of them was typical of the dominant

bourgeois class, with its policies that criminalize the poor and avoid all universal principles of accountability.[63]

By idealizing the crime and violence of marginal classes, Foucault presented the flip-side to his non-disciplinary theory of free market capitalism: the question of exclusion over that of exploitation. Just as socialism was to be replaced with governmentality, revolution would be replaced with resistance. The forms of resistance are not defined by class status or occupation, but by diffuse systems of power and effects of knowledge, and by the destabilization of these mechanisms of power. Social security and universal health care, for example, were attacked as tools of normalization. Idealizing marginality – the handicapped, the poor, the mentally ill, drug addicts and criminals – Foucault abandoned political struggles against class exploitation. According to Zamora, "[t]he end of the fight against inequality through social security, and the call for another system, thus paved the way for the neoliberal assault on the welfare state and social security, systems for means-tested and limited welfare."[64] What Foucault promoted instead was the entrepreneurialism of *homo economicus* and the individual's right and responsibility to choose among available consumer goods and services. Such freedom was to provide an escape from the forms of disciplinary normalization that constrict individuals. As Zamora points out, however, this became the choice between socialism and capitalism.

Retroactively speaking, history has not been on the side of Foucault. Rather than freedom we have witnessed the increase of labour time, workfare, the greater emphasis on normalization through identity injunctions and lifestyles, and economic stagnation in consumer societies. For Mitchell Dean, Foucault's adoption of neoliberalism has several downfalls: an emphasis on population control that leads to a neo-Malthusianism; a reduction of law to techniques of governance; a historical teleology that assumes greater self-governance by individuals; the contribution of economic liberalism to the normalizations and exclusions that Foucault otherwise decries; the idea of the market as the site of truth; the reduction of class inequality to identity issues; an avoidance of the legacy of leftist resistance to capitalism and its exploitation of nature and human labour; an avoidance of capitalism's tendency towards crisis and imperialism.[65] Loïc Wacquant, for his part, reports on the irony that Foucault's neoliberal theory of biopower, which was supposed to be a less disciplinary form of power, has in actuality resulted the exponential rise of incarceration in Europe and especially the United States.[66] The fact that today's carceral archipelago is no longer concerned with the disciplinary rehabilitation of the inmate has led to the equally destructive warehousing of bodies, workfare and prisonfare, shifting the "technologies of the state" from providing employment and welfare to that of incarcerating greater numbers of mostly poor and marginal people and according to middle and upper-class perceptions of moral worth.

Mitchell Dean makes the interesting observation that although Foucault's

work is "disadvantaged with respect to an economic diagnosis of the present," and unable to think in terms of finance, debt, money and economic relations as social relations, his legacy has nevertheless been central to the Italian autonomist tradition associated with Negri and others, and their emphasis on post-disciplinary formations of subjectivity.[67] We are now back to contemporary issues relating to the network society and the ideology of networks. If Jan Rehmann is correct and Foucault failed to see power as a cooperative capacity, then Italian autonomism would seem today to have the ability to adapt his notion of micro-practices and his dismissal of ideology critique for the needs of democracy from below, all the while addressing the problems of capitalist domination, including, as Rehmann mentions, the "conditions of computerized labour in high-tech capitalism."[68] But what happens when the conditions of networked cybercapitalism are combined with some of the worst aspects of the Foucauldian theory of biopower and neoliberal governance? What good is it to applaud the fact that we are all networked now if our networking is encouraging us to develop micro-practices of cyberpolitical exploitation?

Ode to a Pair of Bondage Trousers

In a simple, everyday example of today's newly conceived state of cyberpower, the Montreal *Festival du nouveau cinéma* presented its 2016 programme plainly enough as a festival for cinephiles, bringing together audiences, professionals and filmmakers. It added to this the conspicuous statement that cinema is no longer something that is lived from an ivory tower and that we must together keep the flame of film burning. This anxious conflation of collectivity with commerce is far from the engaged cinema of the 1960s and 70s and the "politique d'auteur" of the French New Wave. It speaks rather to the confusion regarding what constitutes a public or even an artist in the age of the networked creative class and creative cities promotion, where identities are à la carte and social struggles are fodder for the film machine, a bio-feedback loop between the cultural politics of representation and disaster capitalism. The autonomist theorist Franco Berardi addresses this crisis of cybercapitalism in his 2012 book *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*.[69] Economic dogma, he argues, has since the 1970s destroyed political reason and the ideology of economic liberalism has replaced politics with "technolinguistic automatisms" that are embedded in the global networked machine.[70] Such "bio-economic totalitarianism" incorporates the automatisms that are produced by the accelerating "infosphere" of "semio-capital," the endless flow of images and information that causes the social organism to mutate and to transform resistance into algorithmic formulae and unquestionable dogmas.

The rate of information, according to Berardi, is equivalent to the time that is available to consciousness. Crises like Fukushima, the BP Gulf spill,

the 2008 financial collapse or the Greek debt crisis of 2011 do not disrupt the apparent "irreversibility" of the dominant economic paradigm. Berardi understands this problem of hypercomplexity in the terms of cybernetics. In the case of negative feedback, a system opposes change to input so that this system can stabilize. In the case of positive feedback, the system increases the amount of disruption in response to input, which can lead to self-reinforcing feedback. The latter, which is everywhere promoted in a network society, leads to a vicious circle, from media conformism to right-wing electoral victories and financial authoritarianism. Berardi writes: "in conditions of info-acceleration and hypercomplexity, as the conscious and rational will becomes unable to check and adjust to trends, the trends themselves become self-reinforcing, up to the point of final collapse."[71] This is why the Invisible Committee argue that the discourse of neoliberal restructuring is one that accepts crisis as means to impose new waves of "creative destruction."[72] Interrupting catastrophe is no simple matter, however, since we cannot directly conform to reality and ethical truths. One reason for this is the way that the practices of governing have changed. In keeping with Foucault, the Invisible Committee see governance as the management of the behaviour of populations. Moreover, they consider that those who govern and those who are governed have collapsed into the same bio-feedback mechanisms. In a chapter titled "Fuck Off, Google," they note how the same logic of global networking that activists celebrate – spontaneous, connected civic gestures, participatory social networks – is promoted by government advisers who believe that governments, just like film festivals, are no longer centralized top-down institutions of power, but rather platforms that facilitate the linking and self-governance of citizens by providing access to technologies and coordinating information. In an allusion to Foucault's theory of governance, they write:

> Even if these [ideas] are seen as fanciful cogitations, as products of the somewhat overheated brains of Silicon Valley, they still confirm that the practice of government is less identified with state sovereignty. In the era of networks, governing means ensuring the interconnection of people, objects, and machine as well as the free – i.e., transparent and controllable – circulation of information that is generated in this manner.[73]

The Committee goes further than biopower into the zone of cyberpower by assuming that infrastructure is today itself power and that of all the key infrastructures, the virtual institutions of the Internet, Facebook, Google and Apple, are the new forms of government. Like Berardi, they view self-reinforcing positive feedback as a political process, a new art of government designed

by the so-called science of cybernetics, which is replacing political economy. Cybernetic government, they warn, "is inherently apocalyptic."

> Its purpose is to locally impede the spontaneous, entropic, chaotic movement of the world and to ensure 'enclaves of order,' stability, and – who knows? – the perpetual self-regulation of systems, through the unrestrained, transparent, and controllable circulation of information.[74]

Examples of the failure of cybernanthropy include the way the U.S. federal government reacted to natural disasters like hurricanes Katrina and Irma, Superstorm Sandy, the lead water contamination in Flint, Michigan, or the Louisiana flooding of 2016. During the last of these, Obama remained for the most part at a Martha's Vineyard resort, only to emerge one day with a fifteen-minute speech praising the next to nothing federal emergency aid for flood victims and an appeal to volunteer help to offset state expenditures, a necessity in this case since more than half of the flood victims had no insurance due to the fact that federal FEMA coverage in high-risk areas is too expensive. In the case of New Orleans, public assets were privatized and the public school system was replaced with charter schools. In Flint, people whose children had been poisoned by water contamination were told by Obama not to worry and to rely on charity and philanthropy for support. Similar privatizations of public education were proposed in Puerto Rico after hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

"Cybernetic governmentality" or "cybernetized capitalism" also attacks subjectivity. It prefers a transparent humanity and a voided subject that is outwardly oriented to external data, someone "emptied out by the very flows that traverse it, electrified by information, attached to the world by an ever-growing quantity of apparatuses":

> A Quantified Self that will monitor, measure, and desperately optimize every one of its gestures and each of its affects. For the most advanced cyberneticists, there's already no longer man and his environment, but a systems-being which is itself part of an ensemble of complex information systems, hubs of automatic processes…[75]

The question of subjective autonomy and self-determination that Foucault believed would be enhanced by neoliberal policy is for Berardi a matter of whether or not it is possible to escape positive feedback. Any possibility of subjectivation or political solidarity is limited by precarity and populist reaction. When society is wired to techno-linguistic automatisms, he argues, people

act like swarms, a multitude of beings with no common intentionality and with different motivations. The autonomist notion of multitudes is therefore too idealistic; it needs to be complemented by the concept of the swarm and the network. Berardi defines a network as "a plurality of organic and artificial beings, of humans and machines who perform common actions thanks to procedures that make possible their interconnection and interoperation."[76] In order to be part of such a network, one must adapt and respond to certain programmed stimuli according to the established rules. A swarm performs such networked actions in a coordinated way. In conditions of hypercomplexity, he argues, humans increasingly act like swarms, following simplified pathways and patterns of interaction. Networks respond to techno-linguistic procedures, social and financial obligations, and psycho-media invasions. One can resist the superego pressure of the swarm but one cannot change the pattern. The question then is how to emancipate affects and language from the automated "insolvency" of swarm behaviours?

Berardi's solutions to the swarm behaviour of networked complexity are a reprise of the "exodus" schemes of the Italian autonomists in the 1960s and 70s: refuse the guilt structures of the network; refuse the misery of conformism; refuse the privatization of needs and the reduction of language to exchange relations. Berardi then relates poetry to finance. Human language is drawn into the automated and abstract machines of semiotic circulation. Enunciation is canceled and is made compatible with Internet search engines and digital-financial formats: "The subsumption of language by the semiocapitalist cycle of production effectively freezes the affective potencies of language."[77] Humans are deprived, through their very speech and gestures, of any conjunctive ability to connect with others. They become pathogenic and disempathic. What can be done?

Against the techno-linguistic machine, Berardi proposes the modernist or avant-garde solution of reactivating the voice through poetry. Poetry's ability to abandon the referentiality of the swarm network and to reimagine the desiring force of enunciation is potentially capable of reactivating the sensuous emotional body. He contrasts financial finitude to the infinite game of interpretation and the infinite ambiguity of meaning, escaping the order of exchangeability. Berardi wishes that the general intellect could re-connect with the social body. Infinite ambiguity of meaning, however, is today part of the same semio-capitalism that he otherwise decries. Why return to the postmodern thematics of a Barthesian infinite semiosis, Derridean différance and Lyotardian language games when it is certain that this postmodern toolkit does nothing to reduce the level of semio-inflation. As Berardi himself puts it in his book: more signs, more words, more information produce less meaning.[78] Note too that he seems elsewhere less convinced of the political potential of such "emancipation of the sign" and "ethics of singularity" insofar

as bureaucrats and bankers transform the "products of nomadic inventers" into money and the museum.[79] The point of advocating poetry, then, is to distance autonomous politics from political vanguardism. As he argues in an essay on the nomadic Mao-Dadaists of Bologna in 1977, the course of history can now only be changed through an immanent co-participation of art and everyday life. Otherwise, the only gesture remaining for a historical avant garde is self-erasure, as seen for example in the act of Joe Corré, the son of Malcolm McLaren and Vivian Westwood, who on November 26, 2016 – the fortieth anniversary of the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' – burned his £5 million collection of punk memorabilia.

Ideology Strikes Back

Here we come to the contradictions, if not the despairing nihilism, of the theory of cyberpower, which combines structuralism's obsession with closed systems along with the anti-ideology presuppositions of the later Foucault's theories of neoliberal biopower and governmentality. In his 2008 book *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Žižek reads such erasures as Corré's as acts made in the absence of a cause. Things look bad for great causes, and even for punk music, in a postmodern era unable to think beyond economic liberalism and an authoritarian community spirit.[80] Žižek's book is thus conceived as a critique of the kind of anti-totalitarian thought that characterized the *nouveaux philosophes* and that swayed Foucault and his followers all the way to today's academic schizo-anarchism. In the context of postmodernism's rejection of "strong thought," enunciation should not attach the general intellect to the social body. Enunciation should rather be understood in its separation from the act of enunciation, undermining the big Other of the neoliberal situation. The return to the sensuous body only seeks to make tolerable the prevalent capitalist realism. The conservative rejection of revolution bypasses the critique of inequality and so what must be rejected instead is the desiring force of neoliberal demands, the networked sociality that I try to impress with my acts of conformity.

Žižek's rejection of immanentist dogma is described in the chapter "The Crisis of Determinate Negation," in which he also argues against the "global techno-capitalist order," but contends, in contrast to Berardi, that change can only emerge from a dialectically understood "unmediated outside." To abandon dialectical mediation and negation, for Žižek, is equivalent to accepting capitalism's ideological triumph. Such renunciation is accompanied by so many weak claims to resistance through exodus from any macro-political confrontation with capitalism, as exemplified by "new times" cultural studies and postmodern difference politics. The foreclosure of class struggle, defined as the "old paradigm," returns in everyday acts of minor subversion and the

avoidance of a radical left politics. "[T]oday, the movements of gay rights, human rights, and so on, all rely on state apparatuses, which are not only the addressee of their demands, but also provide the framework for their activity (stable civil society)."[81] To be fair, the same could be said for more standard kinds of state provision, from welfare to employment and environmental protection. Regardless, the lesson of such minor practices and difference politics is the indestructability of capitalism, which is otherwise disputed by ultra-left thinkers like John Holloway, Tiqqun and Théorie Communiste.[82] Žižek mentions as an example of such "weak theory," Antonio Negri's 2008 book *Goodbye Mr. Socialism*, which advocates nomadic resistance rather that the confrontation with state power.[83] The question then has to do with the way that today's left frames the problem of anti-capitalism. Should politics be defined as a matter of tolerance for cultural diversity within economic uniformity, a pragmatic relativism and ethics of recognition, or should we not rather accept the question of finitude? Žižek's argument that the superego injunctions of capitalism productively demand our self-destruction cannot be gainsaid by the doxas of discourse theory, which consider the subject to be little more than the effect of neoliberal subjectivization. The Lacanian subject, in contrast, precedes such subjectivization; his or her subjectivity is a defensive response to the symbolic injunctions that allow him or her to become what they already are: the subject in language. The subject is therefore nothing but the failure of neoliberal and discursive subjectivization, the failure to fully assume symbolic mandates and the failure of interpellation. This feature of subjectivity is what Lacan refers to as death drive.

The problem with today's post-political politics, especially insofar as it is premised on discourse theory and systems theories, is that it accepts the liberal state but not its institutions and so defines politics as a series of unconnected or interconnected demands. The critique of essentialism in matters of identity obfuscates the acceptance of the essentialism of capitalist exchange as the neutral background against which one judges the progress of civil rights and the "evolution" of new subjectivities.[84] Needless to say, such "extra-statal" ethics do not address, let alone challenge, the ideological norms of capitalism's regulatory mechanisms.

Rather than bombard the state with infinite demands it cannot meet, or with the ambiguity of poetry, as Berardi proposes, Žižek suggests that we should challenge the state with precise, finite demands. Such demands need to be understood against the background of the real subsumption of labour and the presumption that the new conditions of networked immaterial labour have in some respects surpassed the contradictions of the Marxist notion of exploitation. Autonomist Marxists like Negri assume that the productivity of the general intellect can become uncoupled from capitalist social relations. However, the thrust of Marx's argument in his *Grundrisse* is that such productive forces,

even if post-industrial, are absorbed into capital and appear as its attribute as means of production. In some ways the Italian autonomists have become too teleological with regard to means of production and questions of class composition, too dependent on otherwise disavowed notions of dialectical overcoming and insensitive to what Marx emphasized as the tensions within productive forces. The autonomist fantasy is to accept capitalism's new productive powers as a direct instantiation of communism, a deterritorialized and frictionless digital capitalism that rejects the Hegelian categories of negation and alienation. In contrast to the abstract negation of anti-capitalism, Žižek defends the patient, positive work of "determinate negation." Short of revolution, this might be something like a Badiou-inspired fidelity to the event.

Capitalism never overcomes its own contradictions without the active resistance of revolutionary struggle. In other words, there is no biopower without exploitation and class struggle. Post-Fordist capitalism exploits the cooperating labour of the networked digitariat. At the same time capitalism is completely indifferent to the productive, creative multitude. What autonomists today understand as directly socialized labour and creative cooperation is not simply a happy synthesis of form and content. Capital's cyber-technologies produce the infrastructures for this cooperation to happen and so we remain within capitalism. Žižek argues that whereas Negri proposes the fusion of modes of production and relations of production, Marx proposes instead a radical gap, a worker who is not subsumed to the production process and becomes rather, a political animal. What is needed, he says, is a minimum of anti-determinism as means to avoid "biopolitical vegetation."[85] Determination is partly virtual, a passage from the virtual to reality. One could think for example of Naomi Klein's description of how it is that the climate change denial movement is motivated by the knowledge that tackling climate change would bring with it the end of capitalism as we know it.[86] This repeats the claim by Ayn Rand that Žižek often mentions, which holds that if people wanted socialism they would be willing to accept greater government control over their lives.[87] Žižek extends this awareness to that of leftists themselves, who should come to terms with the limits of the fantasy of "self-transparent organization" and "direct democracy" without political alienation, without the institutions of the state, without rules for political coexistence, a legal order and police functions. This fantasy, one comes to understand, is the fantasy of the network as a fully self-transparent socius.

The Real of Class Struggle

Žižek's theory of an authentic act will serve here as a final statement on how to rethink politics outside the logic of power and resistance. According to Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, Foucault's discourse theory has been one of the main

targets of Žižek's criticism since the fall of Soviet Communism. In their co-authored work, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, Feldner and Vighi argue that the success of discourse analysis in academia has accompanied the view that the Marxist paradigm of ideology critique in no longer valid.[88] Foucault's failure to address class struggle and his translation of antagonism into positivist notions of subjective difference has depoliticized capitalist social relations. Foucault replaced ideology with discourse, a shift that was accepted by leftists who adhered to Althusser's structuralist Marxism and who feared accusations of idealism and determinism. Discourse seemed more materialist somehow, especially when supported by Foucault's detailed archaeologies, which remain important historical investigations. The irony, according to Feldner and Vighi, is that Foucault's genealogies, however crypto-normative and often counter-factual, fulfilled the traditional functions of ideology critique.

In opposition to Foucault's post-structuralist historicism, Žižek emphasizes historicity. Historicity is premised on a dialectical relationship with the Real as a meaningless, unhistorical and traumatic element that destroys all attempts at ideological suture and totalization. For Žižek, the Real is the blind spot of historicism, which Foucault consigned to Freudian mythology. Instead, Foucault attempted to hard-wire history with his anti-Freudian quest for a "positive unconscious of knowledge," as described in his foreword to *The Order of Things*. In Lacanian terms, Foucauldian archaeology approaches the order of the Symbolic as the non-subjective dimension of discourse, reducing the subject to an effect of discourse and the conditions of knowledge.[89] Purging the unconscious of its "negative" implications, Foucault sought to bypass Hegelianism along with its Marxist and psychoanalytic offshoots. His effort to liberate difference, similar in inspiration to Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, is shadowed by capture and the eternal return. Both of these thinkers' emphasis on absolute immanence led them to a pre-transcendent metaphysical materialism. The Hegelian notion of concept and the Freudian notion of repression, in contrast, register reality and desire negatively.

Whereas Foucault's historicism, according to Feldner and Vighi, reduces society to "the network of relations of power and knowledge," which is in reality a domestication of historicity, Žižekian ideology critique posits the Real as the non-symbolizable kernel of historical change.[90] The implication is that reality must be understood to be always incomplete, "not-all" and inconsistent. If one was to return to postmodern notions like language games and infinite semiosis, one would arrive at the form of an ahistorical ideological closure and collusion with the status quo.[91] What a focus on dialectics allows for instead is a notion of the gap between the visible and the invisible, a knowledge that is divided between its explicit manifestation and its unthinkable, a relationship between the Symbolic and the Real that is regulated by ideology. For Feldner and Vighi, the innovative aspect of Žižek's work is its emphasis on the

non-ideological realm of enjoyment, an erratic excess that disturbs rather than underwrites libidinal economy. All totalitarian ideological systems rely on the maintenance of a division between the sayable and the unsayable, the visible and the invisible, a power that is reflected in the cynical attitude of subjects who know the falsity of the official ideological line but hold to it as a matter of belief, one might say, as a matter of networked sociality, careerism or survival. Such belief in "discursive" authority has less to do with power-knowledge and more to do with unconscious enjoyment.

The distance that today's discourse theorists, neoliberals and cybernanthropes want subjects to take from Marxist dialectics is a measure of ideology. Žižek's confrontation with ideological interpellation draws on Hegelian dialectics to show how ideology functions more effectively when we assume we are free from its symbolic mandates: one does not directly endorse capitalism, one simply accepts that there is no possibility for radical alternatives since the new conditions of production are inherently biopolitical. The question then is how to challenge the frames of ideological enjoyment. The crux of the matter is that contradictions are internal as much as external. Our most intimately held assumptions are radically external, a transitivity that is displayed in laughter and in belief. The most obvious form of this is the attitude that it is the enemy's political worldview that is ideological and not my own. Perhaps the supreme instance of this is the thesis of American exceptionalism, which allows the U.S. to imagine itself the world's police force at the same time that it causes civil wars everywhere its soldiers and C.I.A. agents operate.

The enigma in even global politics is that there is no big Other, no supra-national governmental power or global public sphere that can adjudicate on behalf of humanity. The fact of this absence is addressed, on the one hand, with liberal multiculturalism, and on the other, with fundamentalist populism, both of them means to cope with the problem of antagonism by reducing it to a matter of positive knowledge. All that one needs to do in order to deal with hypercomplexity, it would seem, is look in the mirror. Such identitarianism conceals the gap between the symbolic order and its inconsistency; this gap is further concealed by the fundamentalisms that react to the culture wars of liberal multiculturalists. Ironically, the direct identifications of populists touch on the class antagonisms that are otherwise repressed, signs of the failure of liberals to allow for the emergence of genuine revolutionary forces. According to Feldner and Vighi's reading of Žižek, this in no way implies that we should identify with populism rather than liberalism, but that the problems posed by the rise of populism give us a view of the antagonisms that structure global neoliberal ideology. The key to the populist's politics is their attachment to the "trans-ideological" core of enjoyment, an irrational, external spectre of belief that is never directly assumed and never simply an explicit doctrine or political conviction. Such enjoyment is not spontaneous but is part of a network of

obscure presuppositions, rituals and institutions that are anchored in *jouissance*. The *nouveaux philosophes*' critique of Enlightenment rationality as the source of genocide is thus a moot point since ideological effectivity does not rely on political principles, explicit truths or rational constructs. One should therefore caution against the Foucault-inspired politics of marginals, outcasts and anti-normative sex radicals. Nothing about such subjectivities and forms of resistance are automatically and inherently progressive. Moreover, the way that capitalist ideology works today is hardly only a matter of top-down ideological pressure. For instance, the worry by the *Festival du nouveau cinéma* about ivory towers is only there to dissimulate the real ideological pressure, which is that one should avoid at all costs the negativity of a critical perspective.

According to the notion of determinate negation, it is necessary to move beyond discourse and ideology critique to propose a political project for which a place outside capitalism is possible, but only if it is understood that this place cannot be occupied by any "positive unconscious" or any other kind of determination. This is ideology as excess, deadlock and impossibility, as repressed libidinal identification. Such ideology is effective because it is based on the non-discursive excess of subjectivity.[92] The symbolic order of discursive rules requires the repression of the Real as jouissance or the Real of fantasy since these represent a limitation on phallic enjoyment – something that cannot be enjoyed, absolute negativity beyond ideology. What Žižekian ideology critique is concerned with, then, are the limits of the symbolic field and the failure of a fully symbolizable world. In this sense, the only true act of freedom, the only authentic act, is one that assumes and identifies with the excessive gap of ideology. It is an act that does not rely on dominant ideological coordinates, which are difficult enough to resist given that they are typically unstated. As Žižek puts it in Lacanian terms, an act is not the inherent transgression of an existing order, but something that redefines the field of the known.[93]

It is in this context that Žižek calls for the renewal of class struggle. Insofar as class is ignored as the structuring principle that over-determines social reality, postmodern politics emphasize identity markers. By devoting excessive importance to questions of sexuality, gender and race, the left is demobilized by the ideology of upper-to-middle-class capitalist ideology. Žižek, according to Feldner and Vighi, argues that one should break with the blackmail of multicultural political correctness, even if this results in allegations of intolerance. The disavowed enjoyment of the multiculturalist is his or her connection to capitalism, and moreover, their demand that others accept their rules of conduct and lifestyle preferences.[94] Anti-racism and anti-sexism come to operate a closure of political horizons since racism and sexism will always be problems, however mitigated their effects. Racism and sexism, rather than freedom and equality, become the transcendent principles of liberal multiculturalism. No wonder then that today's radical democrats believe that to accept a

transcendent principle is tantamount to the acceptance of the ruling order, the global world system and its biopolitical cybernanthropic orders of power. This order is sustained by the Real of class struggle as its purest point of exclusion.

There is nothing self-evident about Žižek's idea of the Real of class struggle, however, in the context of post-Fordism. Autonomist Marxism, in particular the work of Negri and Lazzarato, argues that today's immaterial cognitive labour reduces the labour time required for capitalist valorization and so the basis for exploitation diminishes. In his book on Žižek's dialectics, Vighi presents Žižek's critique of autonomist theory, which underscores the continuation within post-Fordism of capitalist exploitation and capitalist ideology. The simple fact that production has reached a stage beyond industrialism and blue-collar work does not mean that such work has ceased to exist and it also does not imply that immaterial labour is non-alienated labour. A division of labour continues to be operative even if things have shifted in technologically developed countries towards services and communication. Moreover, just like commodity production, the value of immaterial cognitive and creative work is recuperated at the level of capitalist circulation and consumption.[95] The forms of exploitation change also as workers are made to be more autonomous or are made more malleable through participatory management schemes. The liberation of subjectivity from the ideological trappings of a working class mentality, where self-employed autonomous and entrepreneurial activity operates within a synergistic system of rhizomatic and networked flows, is presented by autonomists as a challenge to capitalist appropriation.

The question posed by Vighi is the extent to which producers and consumers are being integrated into a single figure.[96] The cooperative energies of immaterial workers, he argues, remain connected to capitalism through regimes of unconscious enjoyment, which are cultural, social, political and ideological. This is value produced according to a biopolitics that is internal to the dynamics of capitalism. It is not so much that knowledge is power, but that knowledge as jouissance is a new method of extracting surplus-value. Hardt and Negri's approach to biopolitics construes knowledge production as part of a new commons beyond labour time. Yet capitalist ideology affects proletarian work as much as creative and cognitive labour. Immersion in capitalist ideology is in fact greater with the latter insofar as capital and the Discourse of the University have commodified the subject's surplus jouissance. This University Discourse obfuscates class exploitation, replacing it with the anti-oppression and intersectionist politics of victimization. One fights poverty and racism rather than ending exploitation and inequality. Workers are all the while exploited more fully, down to the minor details of everyday life, a violent brutality that is sometimes celebrated by autonomists as a libidinal economy freed by capitalist deterritorialization. The counter-argument to this is that while the mode of production has changed, the

relations of production remain those of vampiric exploitation and expropriation. Marx's assumption that capitalism contains the seeds of its own undoing is accepted as dogma. According to Žižek, however, Marxian communism is a fantasy that belongs to capitalism itself, its inherent transgression. Capitalism cannot exist without the obstacles and contradictions that make its radical productivity possible.

For Vighi, what follows from this deadlock is the possibility of freedom and the space of action. From a Lacanian point of view, we cannot fully subjectivize the jouissance that binds us to a given social order. The fantasy of individual autonomy is our enslavement to ideology. However, there is something of the nature of subjectivity which is always in excess, a negativity through which the subject's constitutively antagonistic relationship to the world emerges as contingency. Žižek's Hegelian reading of Lacan defines the subject as a figure that must recognize itself as alienated from immersion in the socio-symbolic order. The inconsistency of Subject therefore coincides with the defect of Substance, or of the symbolic as absolute. Subject and Substance are always connected but never coincide.[97] Subject and Object are therefore never fully opposed and the Lacanian concept of jouissance is one means to elaborate this non-coincidence of Subject and Substance. A proliferation of gaps challenge the *lathouses* (fetishes) that characterize *lamella* (suture, binding).

For all of the chatter about a fully networked social factory, one cannot displace the antagonistic nature of society and the impossibility of transparent communication. Class struggle can therefore never be a simply reformist process. Freedom from external constraint is inherently traumatic since separation from the world is separation from the unconscious enjoyment that binds us to it. This is difficult to fathom because the subject is riddled with illusions of autonomy that are co-terminous with symbolic integration. According to Vighi, the narcissistic postmodern individual sees himself as detached from the normative mainstream, an illusion that has been amplified by Foucault's conflation of aesthetics and ethics, as well as his anti-universalism.[98] Such proto-psychotic solipsism is enabled by the conditions of subjectivity. The opposite of this is a collective political subject that emerges as decentred, that is not fully self-transparent and that is yet not simply "bewitched by negativity."[99] The excess of such a collective subject is its objectivity, which can only be known retroactively. As Vighi has it, the disavowal of class struggle in today's University Discourse is the primary manifestation of the Real that paradoxically also makes today's society possible as a perpetually inconsistent polity. Social networks are thus "floating elements of the signifying chain," seemingly consistent and meaningful as forms of appearance, and giving meaning to class struggle as "the Real that organizes the Symbolic through its negative magnitude."[100] The consummate "networker" is therefore nothing but the "reflexive determination" of the class struggle – the embodiment of its opposite.

This brings us to the question of action as the basis of what is to be done, if anything. Žižek's peculiar approach to revolutionary agency places a premium on over-identification with the symbolic order as a means to emphasize its inhuman excess. Against pessimistic capitulation to the notion of a fully administered world, or the state of "bare life" in a risk society, Žižek's Hegelo-Lacanian dialectics perceives the inhuman at the core of the human, that aspect of human subjects which resists inclusion into something like the Deleuzians' vaunted machinic enslavement, war machines and biopolitical assemblages. A political act always suspends the socio-symbolic network that otherwise seeks to guarantee the subject's social incorporation.[101] A genuine act is always a kind of social death because it is not authorized and guaranteed by the existing rules of conduct. In this sense it is governed by what Freud refers to as death-drive, a breakdown of the symbolic economy and social coherence. As Žižek puts it:

> What is therefore crucial for Hegel's notion of the act is that an act always, by definition, involves a moment of externalization, self-objectification, of the jump into the unknown. To 'pass to the act' means to assume the risk that what I am about to do will be inscribed into a framework whose contours elude my grasp, that it may set in motion an unforeseeable train of events, that it will acquire a meaning different from or even totally opposed to what I intended to accomplish – in short, it means to assume one's role in the game of the 'cunning of reason.'[102]

An act is not direct enjoyment but rather a self-destitution, a destruction of fantasy supports. As it coheres with Lacan's dictum that one should not give way on one's desire, it is constitutive of the dialectic of drive and desire. Žižek puts this nicely when he writes: "An act is neither a strategic intervention in the existing order, nor its 'crazy' destructive negation; an act is an 'excessive,' trans-strategic intervention which redefines the rules and contours of the existing order."[103] One can see in this regard how Black Lives Matter has been in some ways, however necessary, a step back from Occupy Wall Street. The trap of policing the poor is a well-laid plan by neoliberal capitalism that OWS had the power to dislodge but that BLM has had much more difficulty affecting.

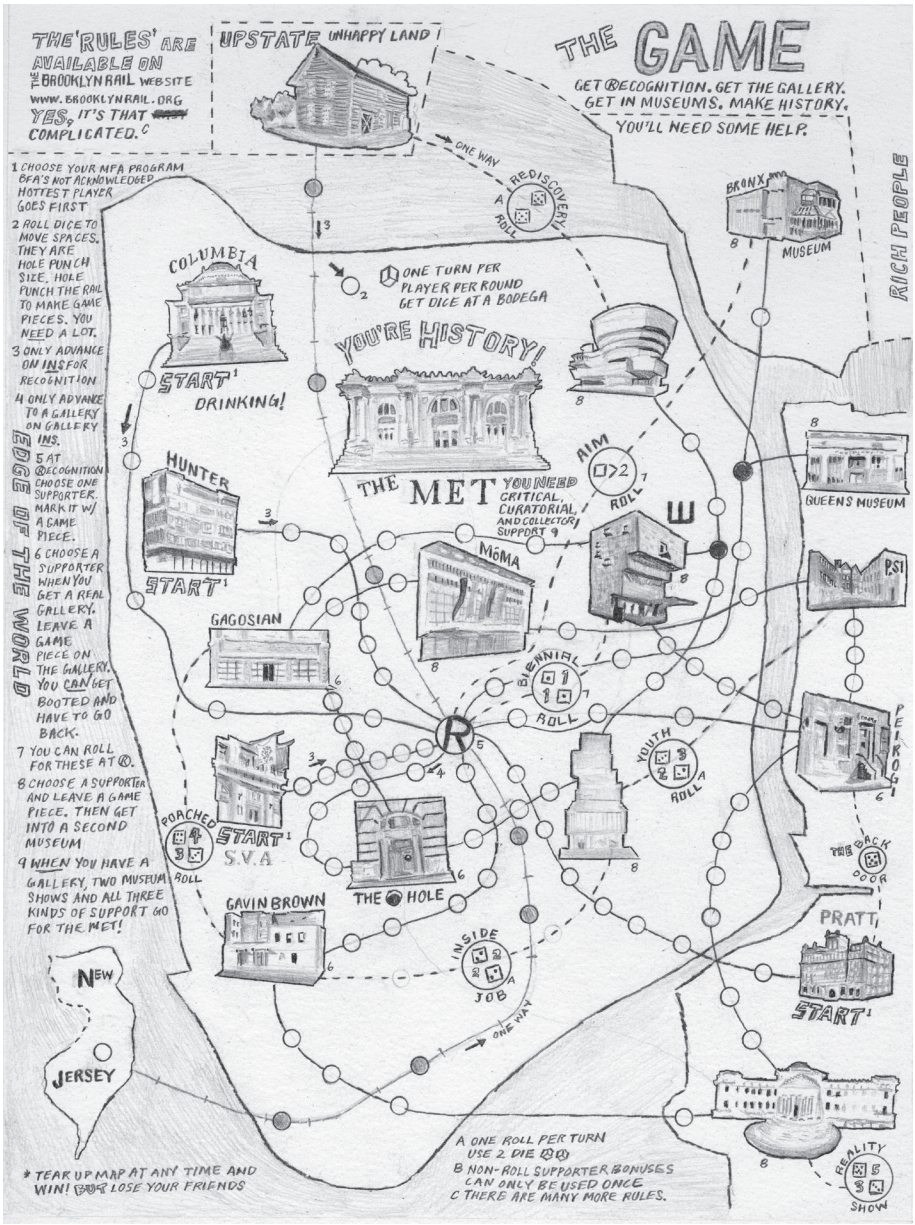
The necessity of trauma in the Real of class struggle means that the revolutionary subject withdraws from fetishistic attachment to enjoyment; in particular, the enjoyment of both what I am and what it is I am against. The choice to be a non-pathological agent is therefore universalizing in its implications since it is not premised on difference from the other. Culture wars can be seen in this regard, whether fought from the right or the left, to be fully ensconced in the pathologies of enjoyment. That is why the elevation of identity into a political principle avoids rather than defines radical politics.

Radical agency is on the side of the Real, not the Symbolic, and not the Imaginary. This is all the more complicated today as biocapitalism ideologically organizes politics according to identity markers. The purpose of a revolutionary act is therefore to identify with the antagonistic core of ideology, to inscribe antagonism and to thereby sabotage capitalist inevitability by actualizing the possibilities it hitherto seemed to proscribe. The defence of such a lost cause as internationalist communism and the solidarity of struggles puts into effect a new causal link. It is an act of self-definition, self-determination and self-limitation. It does not represent closure, but the radicality of a freedom that is not included in advance as an instrument of fate or a feature of power-knowledge. Despite its pre-emption by the situation, the drive of class struggle as a politics of the Real is the intrusion of a negativity that disturbs the dominant ideology.

Against the refrain on the left for a politics based on identities and micro-practices, the least a radical can do is resort to Bartleby politics: "I would prefer not to." How can one not participate in culture wars, one might ask, in the face of various forms of oppression? The answer to this is contradictory, in part, as culture wars are an aspect of today's class war and not its alternative. Petty-bourgeois culture wars are primarily opposed to the conservative right but because they are amenable to neoliberal democracy their effects work against the actualization of leftist solidarity. Empire already recognizes identities, even if unevenly; it is the exploited and the excluded who are systematically oppressed. When Donald Trump formed his right-wing administration, the nomination of billionnaire heiress Betsy DeVos as secretary of education – someone whose Education Freedom Fund advocates replacing public schools with private and for-profit schools and whose Action Institute seeks to reinstate child labour – was welcomed by the *New York Times* as an indication that Trump's cabinet would not be comprised of only white men.[104] The solution to these kinds of permutations of the culture war is disconnection from capitalist ideology, even if we cannot exit from the modes and relations of production on which our survival depends. We must be allowed to discuss the failures not only of communism but of postmodernism. If we limit ourselves to achieving gains within the matrix of the University Discourse we will fail to disturb the cybernanthropic capitalism than enslaves us all.

In the following chapter I examine some of the ways that contemporary art and music historians are systematically eliminating class struggle from the history of the radical avant gardes. Such work reflects the way that class struggle, as Feldner and Vighi put it, is today less a matter of the political organization of the proletariat than it is a "disavowed matrix" and thus a contradiction for any new anti-hegemonic politics. The problem with Foucault is that he made it impossible to think resistance outside the dominant technocratic regimes of power. By the same token, despite his brilliance, Foucault made it impossible

to think since he was obsessed with the conditions of possibility of thought. An act, for Lacan, is premised on the fact that knowledge is a deceptive chimera, a *méconnaissance*.[105] By not allowing a place for the subject in his anti-humanist theories, Foucault made power into an ontology and thereby avoided ontological failure, in part by seeking to bypass the limitations of human knowledge. Foucault's notion of power was then made infinite, like a networked rhizome, and shorn of dialectical negation. By adopting Foucault and Deleuze's philosophy of bad infinity, today's social movements have devised for themselves traps of bad political affinity. Criticizing the project of Enlightenment, Foucault gave birth to an apologia for its worst contemporary manifestations.


THE 'RULES' ARE AVAILABLE ON THE BROOKLYN RAIL WEBSITE WWW.BROOKLYNRAIL.ORG YES, IT'S THAT COMPLICATED.C
UPSTATE UNHAPPY LAND
THE GAME
GET RECOGNITION. GET THE GALLERY. GET IN MUSEUMS. MAKE HISTORY. YOU'LL NEED SOME HELP.
ONE WAY
REDISCOVERY ROLL
BRONX MUSEUM
RICH PEOPLE
1 CHOOSE YOUR MFA PROGRAM BFA'S NOT ACKNOWLEDGED HOTTEST PLAYER GOES FIRST
2 ROLL DICE TO MOVE SPACES. THEY ARE HOLE PUNCH SIZE. HOLE PUNCH THE RAIL TO MAKE GAME PIECES. YOU NEED A LOT.
3 ONLY ADVANCE ON INS FOR RECOGNITION
4 ONLY ADVANCE TO A GALLERY ON GALLERY INS.
5 AT RECOGNITION CHOOSE ONE SUPPORTER. MARK IT W/ A GAME PIECE.
6 CHOOSE A SUPPORTER WHEN YOU GET A REAL GALLERY. LEAVE A GAME PIECE ON THE GALLERY. YOU CAN GET BOOTED AND HAVE TO GO BACK.
7 YOU CAN ROLL FOR THESE AT R.
8 CHOOSE A SUPPORTER AND LEAVE A GAME PIECE. THEN GET INTO A SECOND MUSEUM
9 WHEN YOU HAVE A GALLERY, TWO MUSEUM SHOWS AND ALL THREE KINDS OF SUPPORT GO FOR THE MET!
EDGE OF THE WORLD
ONE TURN PER PLAYER PER ROUND GET DICE AT A BODEGA
COLUMBIA
START
DRINKING!
YOU'RE HISTORY!
THE MET
YOU NEED CRITICAL, CURATORIAL, AND COLLECTOR SUPPORT 9
AIM ROLL
QUEENS MUSEUM
HUNTER
START
MoMA
PS1
GAGOSIAN
BIENNIAL ROLL
YOUTH ROLL
PEROTTI
POACHED ROLL
START
S.V.A
THE HOLE
THE BACK DOOR
GAVIN BROWN
INSIDE JOB ROLL
PRATT
START
ONE WAY
NEW JERSEY
REALITY SHOW
* TEAR UP MAP AT ANY TIME AND WIN! OR LOSE YOUR FRIENDS
A ONE ROLL PER TURN USE 2 DIE R
B NON-ROLL SUPPORTER BONUSES CAN ONLY BE USED ONCE
C THERE ARE MANY MORE RULES.

William Powheda, *The Game*, graphite on paper, 55.9 x 43.2 cm, 2010. Courtesy of the artist. Private collection. The goal of the game is to get your work into the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Being networked to supporters with influence allows you to advance your career. The 'Bitter Version' allows you to modify the rules of the game.

THREE

THE AVANT GARDE AS CAPITALIST REALISM

Waning of the Social Media: Ruin Aesthetics in Peer-to-Peer Enterprises. Join the Object Oriented People.
– Geert Lovink

In her work on Cuban cultural policy, Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt mentions the 1980 declaration by UNESCO that art should not be defined as either a commodity or an investment.[1] The statement seems modest when so much of the world is subject to the value form. Gordon-Nesbitt is writing from the context of the U.K., where, between 1997 and 2007, the Labour Party devised ways to undermine the state support of culture. Such "creative industries" policies as came into practice in the U.K., the U.S. and elsewhere, related an abstract notion of creativity to that of innovation in various fields, and focused on the contribution of a vastly defined realm of culture to job and wealth creation. The purpose of her work is to imagine relations between culture, artists, the state and society that are shaped by revolutionary goals and ambitions rather than consumerism. She finds in the case of Cuba, from 1959 to 1976, an effort to use cultural policy to overcome social problems, from injustice and unemployment, to illiteracy and poverty. New economic and organizational forms were devised by the 26th of July Movement to promote a Marxist vision of culture in which cultural activity is an end in itself, giving a social role to art and literature. The Cuban case is remarkable in contrast to the development of culture in North America and Europe. As she puts it:

> While capitalism has consistently been regarded as alienating art from both its creators and the society in which it is made – thereby diminishing its potential contribution to the betterment of humanity and the achievement of social justice – the revolutionary government continues to argue that socialism recognizes the true value of art and literature.[2]

In Gordon-Nesbitt's study, culture is given meaning on the level of ideological struggle and human community against the vagaries of exploitation and imperialism. Her research can be distinguished from contemporary histories of culture that orient theory in the direction of networks and thus, as I have argued about network society more generally, in the direction of neoliberalism. While the concept of networks can be applied to almost any subject area, how might it influence the history and theory of the avant garde? Recent writings by David Cottington and Benjamin Piekut are relatively rare instances of contemporary research on networked cultural production with a focus on experimental and avant-garde art.[3] If the network society has a particular connection to a bureaucratic society of control, how do networks inform avant-garde praxis without capitulating to the neoliberalization of culture?

The Avant Garde as Usual

Since the advent of neoliberal policies in the 1970s, governments worldwide have been concerned to restore class power and undermine the strength of organized labour in the western democracies as well as the power of revolutionary movements in developing countries. The struggle against organized labour and the attack on the professions took place on many fronts since the 1980s, including that of culture and affecting major institutions like museums and universities. As part of this political project, neoliberalism has sought to undermine radical and left-wing initiatives by emphasizing culture's commercial potential and contribution to economic growth. Culture and art are today conflated with creative thinking and innovation within knowledge and service industries, including advertising, marketing, sports, tourism, fashion, film, music and new communications technologies. The free market rhetoric of neoliberal policy does not seek to protect culture from the vagaries of commercialism, but instead to reorient culture through targeted state funding that supports production that has proven to be economically successful.

How can one politicize culture in this context? The answer for the most part has been to concede to the shift towards creative industries and to complement the ruling class project with a self-defeating power-knowledge rhetoric that recognizes people on the basis of their identity or in terms of the artist as a kind of neo-nomadic subject whose agency unfolds through creative exchange

in transnational networks.[4] Excluded from this process is an appreciation of the contemporary class functions of culture and the contradictions of economic productivity. New art practices are now promoted as part of an end-of-ideology, end-of-history post-politics. The place that is reserved for culture in economic restructuring and privatization is mostly linked to urban development, urban renewal and tourism, and not a means to fight the increasing conditions of inequality and immiseration. The brokering of identities is rather part of the process of cultural consumption, the promotion of affective experiences and academic fodder. All artists, regardless of their identity, are otherwise trained to view themselves as self-regulating entrepreneurial individuals who minimize political risk and maximize self-interest as human capital that contributes to new cultural markets. According to Aras Ozgun, the business and government architects of the creative industries recognize that the individuals, collectives and small businesses that constitute the creative class show a high degree of creative innovation, an ability to assess trends, and a high level of education and skill in the area of digital technologies. The goal of creative industry policies, however, is to change the small business structure and lack of marketing orientation of creative work and direct production towards economic growth and export.[5] The artist is today promoted as the model flex worker for the new freelance economy, a creative entrepreneur who is otherwise accustomed to low wages, job insecurity, innovation and competition.

This sort of biopolitical administration and neoliberal governance seeks to shift cultural production towards a trade model, extracting as much surplus as possible from both productive and non-productive labour. In relation to avant-garde practice, neoliberal capitalism is also interested in controlling the political uses and meanings of art in favour of market mechanisms. In this context, even the history of the avant garde is subject to biopolitical engineering and depoliticization. Aquiescing to these trends, David Cottington's *The Avant-Garde: A Very Short Introduction* rethinks the history of the artistic avant garde on the basis of the new creative industries discourse and network theory.[6] Although it succeeds in being up to date in terms of research methodology, one has difficulty recognizing the politics of the avant garde in Cottington's book. While he rightly seeks to understand the contradictions of the concept and formation of the avant garde, those that he sketches are limited and constrained by actually existing capitalism – which is conflated with art history methodology – thereby reducing at every turn the revolutionary, utopian and anti-capitalist thrust of the avant garde. In other words, his view of the history of the avant garde is put forward from the perspective of contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

Cottington's book opens with terms, definitions and an outline of his text. While the notion of the avant garde is associated with contemporaneity, this newness is also linked to a critique of the status quo and thus with political

radicalism, usually that of the left. Is this association with leftism warranted, he asks, especially now that art is embroiled in a billion-pound art market? His primary definition then is of the avant garde as "a notional community of self-consciously aesthetically radical artists," followed by the idea of the avant garde as an attitude and an ideology, or of the avant garde as the leading artists of any particular historical moment.[7] All of these are of course related to the origins of the use of the military term "avant-garde" and its association with the French Revolution and the utopian socialists assembled around Henri de Saint-Simon, who saw artists as one of three groups, including scientists and industrialists, who would lead the way to a collective socialism.[8] The contradictions and definitions of the avant garde, linked to the cultural advent of the Romantic and Realist movements, are then said to be bound up with belief in progress, the industrial revolution and the dynamism of capitalism. Citing Marx and Engels' 1848 *Communist Manifesto* and its emphasis on the need for capitalism to constantly revolutionize production, Cottington adds to this Marx and Engels' assessment that markets must "establish connexions everywhere."[9] Artists, in turn, will have to mimic this process while attempting to avoid the advance of capitalism's value system into cultural practice. "Putting into practice the theories of the Saint-Simonians," Cottington writes, "successive governments encouraged the arts, much as their present-day equivalents promote the 'creative industries,' to meet the demands of an increasingly varied and expanding middle-class clientèle with a multiplicity of cultural styles and products."[10] Alienated avant-garde artists responded to industrial capitalism, he says, by establishing their own "networks" of distinct social groupings, with their common attitudes and practices:

> Forced to the margins of the art world, they [artists] sought alternative channels of advancement and terms of recognition, exhibiting or performing together in informal groupings; artists, writers, and musicians networking between their multiplying café-based milieux to promote and contest new ideas and practices.[11]

Cottington then advances his main contribution to the subject, the idea of the avant garde as an "alternative professionalism." His approach is in some ways indifferent to the question of the ontology of art, or of the Hegelian end of art, and more concerned with the material and institutional conditions of production and meaning, emphasizing for instance, in the case of the literary avant garde, the state laws governing the free press and technological changes in printing. For a literary avant garde to emerge, writers needed to create a collective cultural identity, and yet for such a network to become sustainable, they had to consolidate as a counter-cultural formation. The contradictions of

capitalism then cause consolidation to turn into co-optation. The emergence of supporting networks, exhibition and publishing outlets, the professionalization of the field and its divisions of labour transform the avant garde into a formation that "guards" its own proliferating hierarchies. This "alternative professional identity" has three distinct features: the elaboration of aesthetic principles opposed to the mainstream; the development of independent means; and the mutual recognition of common aspirations as an avant garde.

Insofar as he is defining an "avant garde," Cottington is at the same time announcing the terms of its dissolution, in part by associating these definitions with contemporary processes. He writes:

> Between 1910 and 1914, in every city with any cultural dynamism, small groups of aesthetically radical artists, in all media, sprang up like mushrooms in a box overnight, creating a network of exchanges and ideas, cultural products, and their producers (and using every vehicle for these exchanges including the new technologies of the time, such as the telephone, the telegraph, and the automobile) whose hectic pace was unmatched until the internet revolution of the late twentieth century.[12]
>
> This network was an informal one – that is, it followed no established rules or protocols, but made these up for itself as it forged its links and means of communication, and most of these were snuffed out by the First World War before they could be formalized.[13]

With these introductory terms, Cottington has merely sketched the parameters of what Peter Bürger defined as the nineteenth-century bohemian avant garde, with its anti-bourgeois politics limited to aesthetically practiced and represented forms of alienation.[14] The historical avant gardes of the post-WWI period did not aspire to such alternative communities but to a total critique and overturning of bourgeois society, including the ideology of the aesthetic, defined in Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* as the "institution art." Cottington, who is not unaware of the ways in which Bürger's work represents a challenge to the "bourgeois bohemian" tenets of today's alternative creative class, turns his concept on its head and proposes that we understand the historical avant gardes in terms of "institutionalization." He argues that this "second generation" of avant-gardists (otherwise defined by Bürger as the 'historical' avant gardes) benefitted from the "networks" established by the bohemians by developing even more formal sets of protocols. The Soviet avant gardes, for instance, are said to have opened up a "network of self-consciously technically radical artists," while in the U.S., after New York stole the idea of modern art,

international capitalism encouraged "the growth of a network of wealthy collectors of modernist art, and patrons of modernist culture."[15] Cottington defines "alternative networks" as those that are parallel to bourgeois institutions. The term network, as Cottington uses it, has no privileged political sense and simply indicates a collective identity that safeguards an autonomous, internal set of interactions and associations, sometimes supported by a common manifesto or journal publication, as well as external factors such as art markets for middle-class and state sponsors, or the dealer-collector network.[16]

In a more radical reading, Cottington acknowledges the *Communist Manifesto* as having announced the independent initiative of the working class and its party representation in every country of Europe, with its various political programmes for culture, including Lenin's 1905 "Party Organization and Party Literature," which linked an art made for the cause of the proletariat to the vanguard role of the Bolshevik Party. While this could occasion a different reading of culture after, say, the "communist turn" advocated by people like Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Bruno Bosteels and Jodi Dean, it is limited by Cottington to an ahistorical dichotomy between the two tendencies of "authoritarianism" and "libertarianism," the first associated with political programme and the second with Percy Bysshe Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" of 1821, which appealed to the moral quality of the imagination as an alternative to the social didacticism of the Saint-Simonians.[17] Whatever the fate of the Soviet experiment as a "force of attraction … to others within the avant-garde network," the context of western culture defines the most advanced development of forces of production with the growth of urbanization, industrial production, mass communication, popular culture and hedonistic consumption.[18]

The integration of the avant garde into lifestyle consumption was advanced at the turn of the twentieth century by design and the decorative arts, photography and cinema, opening up new markets based on international social contacts. The development of Secessionist movements, however, from Paris to Munich, Berlin and Vienna, provided the model for an anti-academic spirit, alienated from "elite networking" and driven by an alternative professionalism, but eventually pouring all of this radical energy back into the field of culture as a whole through the interconnections of art schools, magazines and galleries.

Cottington's book revisits this basic historical schema in detail, allowing him to more clearly define his network theory and creative industry approach. After the First World War, cities are said to become nodes in an "increasingly consolidated network," starting in Paris as the main hub but then decentralizing into an international constellation of cultural capitals.[19] The influence of Cubism and Futurism, for instance, is felt everywhere in the western world almost simultaneously and in the various art fields – both of them pan-European phenomena despite being politically antithetical. The Dada movement would

spawn near-synchronous and increasingly bureaucratized groups in Bucharest, Zürich, Berlin, New York, Hanover, Cologne and Paris.[20] Cottington notes the curious disappearance of the term "avant garde" amongst avant-gardists between 1918 and 1938, due to the fact that the avant garde network had by that time consolidated into an alternative profession and no longer required the moniker as a badge of membership and identity. His definition of the "avant garde network" gives no doubt concerning his consumer capitalist mindset:

> Individuals acted in what they saw as their own interests, to articulate and promote their aesthetic innovations, to raise their market profile or consolidate their reputations within this new environment built on an 'alternative professionalism,' to make money from the sale of new art or to invest in this art for future financial gain; and the result was the network of the avant-garde.[21]

Cottington does not trouble himself to associate this same consumer capitalism with the conditions and carnage of the Great War. It is enough that WWI be understood as a distant cause for what had become normalized and accepted as a cultural institution. The capitalist character of his use of the term network, and consequently of the notion of a networker, is summed up in his appreciation of the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg. Van Doesburg is held in highest esteem because he worked in several media, including architecture, stained glass, typography, poetry and art criticism. As a tireless organizer, editor and educator, van Doesburg is hailed by Cottington as a champion networker: "the CEO of 'Avant-Garde Inc'."[22]

The rest of the story, according to Cottington, is an interminable dialectic between, on a macro level, the avant garde and capitalist co-optation, and on a micro level, between "the" avant-garde and an abstract avant-gardism represented by commercial popular culture. In the U.S., the formal autonomy promoted by Abstract Expressionism and the criticism of Clement Greenberg detached art from political programme and then subordinated it to the consumerist values of Pop art. While borrowing from mass culture had long been a practice pursued by radical artists, these strategies are said by Cottington to be nested within consumer capitalism and not clearly against it, an ideology of avant-gardism with inherent limitations vis-à-vis the dominant class and so doomed to failure. Since the 1950s, he writes, revolutionary avant-gardism and Greenbergian formalism have fused in the concept of the creative industries, "whose supposedly Midas-like capacity to reinvigorate national economies is a current governmental obsession the world over."[23]

Since the ambition to escape commodification is futile, and since avant-gardists are attracted to commodity culture more than oppositional

politics, according to Cottington, all critique is internal to capitalism, which only deepened with the hardening of the postmodern arteries and the post-Fordist economy of niche marketing. All contemporary assertions of avant-gardism are therefore qualified as ideology. Towards the end of his book, Cottington wishes to acknowledge how the concept of the avant garde has nevertheless been productive for radical forms of contemporary art, understood as culturally left for the most part and politically activist.[24] Several key events, artists and figures are mentioned, along with the salutary caveat that no hegemony is ever complete: the surfacing of radical ideas in the 1960s; struggles for civil and women's rights; antipathy to commodity culture by Minimal and Conceptual artists; the collectivism of groups like the Art Workers' Coalition; anarchist groups like Black Mask, the Motherfuckers, the Yippies, the Diggers and the American Indian Movement; AIDS activists like Gran Fury and feminist groups like Guerrilla Girls. All of these groups and artists emphasized political processes over objects of consumption. Yet their ambitions have been absorbed by a scaled-down cultural-political agenda and what Benjamin Buchloh defines as the tendency of the culture industry to subsume resistance within the terms of capitalism rather than in opposition to it.[25]

Despite this capitalist endgame, also associated with Bürger's negative gloss on the postwar neo-avant gardes, Cottington uncovers some remaining alternative energies. He finds this in the context of postwar France, where intellectual and political ferment and postwar involvement with International Communism led to the exemplary activity of CoBrA, the Lettrists and the Situationist International. Here Cottington shifts his analysis from the dialectical Marxism of Buchloh and Bürger to the anarchism of Gavin Grindon, who understands the success of avant-garde movements in terms of their refusal of the role of the artist and of labour discpline, and their understanding of art as play and free activity – in other words, their rejection of professionalism and capitalist values. Such activism as the Situationists spearheaded in 1968 finds its echo in contemporary interventionist art such as that of the Yes Men, Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, Etcetera, Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination and Critical Art Ensemble. Cottington also makes some somewhat dubious claims for Internet art. He distances all of these, however, from a genuine cultural avant garde, which has otherwise been collapsed into activism, culture jamming and hacking – the price to be paid it seems if artists want to carry forward the "authoritarian" role of "legislating for the world."[26]

In conclusion, Cottington notes the ubiquity and success of the idea of creative industries since New Labour launched its 1998 "Mapping Document," which approaches cultural production as a means to harness local, regional and national financial growth in the period after Fordist industrialism and for

a largely consumer-based tourist economy. Parallel to this is the interest in creativity in the business and corporate sector, blurring the distinctions between work and everyday life. Lifestyles that were once chosen by artists as means to resist capitalist co-optation are now imposed on populations as production is outsourced and labour is made increasingly redundant, flexible, contracted and casualized. More structurally significant than activism, it is this subsumption of labour that for Cottington represents the "final instrumentalization" of the avant garde.[27] The new forms of professionalism and institutionalism that emerge from this context wish to subordinate such culturally enhanced economic growth to worthwhile projects such as urban regeneration and, given the now global reach of the culture industries, to a global network of avant gardes within alternate modernities, creating economic opportunities in developing countries.[28] It is difficult, however, to make the claim that the architecture, gaming, movies, books, music, magazines, radio and television of the global creative industries have anything to do with the avant garde. Regardless, and against the militant optimism of John Roberts and Gregory Sholette, who place their political hopes on the productivity of those who are excluded from the formal economy of culture and those who have inherited the ideology of revolutionary avant-gardism, Cottington affirms Thomas Crow's view that the avant garde is today, to all extents and purposes, the research and development arm of not only the culture industry, as Crow argued, but of post-Fordist consumerism in general.[29]

Command, Control and Creation

While there can be no objection to Cottington's re-reading of the past in light of new developments, and therefore of the effort to understand the avant garde in terms of network theory, one could expect some explanation as to why the concept of networks should provide an explanatory advantage over other concepts. The absence of any reflection on the concept itself is indicative of the tautological function it performs in relation to digital capitalism and the increased cybernetization of even intellectual work. If Cottington perceives networks everywhere it is largely due to the way it operates in his thinking as a feature of the shift towards creative industries. However, by arguing that post-Fordist capitalism conditions all cultural activity, Cottington raises the issue of what an avant-garde artist can be or should be in today's networked society. The problem also extends to radical politics. How can networks account for artistic or political radicality when such radicality is defined as an inherent feature of capitalism? One explanation for Cottington's use of the idea of networks is the fact that the various networks, whether avant-garde or bourgeois, simply stand in for capitalist social relations as such. Žižek reflects on this enigma when he writes:

> What we find here is the standard post-Hegelian matrix of the productive flux which is always in excess with regard to the structural totality which tries to subdue and control it … But what if, in a parallax shift, we perceive *the capitalist network itself as the true excess over the flow of the productive multitude*? What if, while the contemporary production of the multitude directly produces life, it continues to produce an excess (which is even functionally superfluous), the excess of Capital? Why do immediately produced relations still need the mediating role of capitalist relations? What if the true enigma is why continuous nomadic 'molecular' movement needs a parasitic 'molar' structure which (deceptively) appears as an obstacle to its unleashed productivity? Why, the moment we abolish this obstacle/excess, do we lose the productive flux constrained by the parasitic excess? And this also means that we should invert the topic of fetishism, of 'relations between people appearing as relations between things': what if the direct 'production of life' celebrated by Hardt and Negri is falsely transparent? What if, in it, the invisible 'relations between [immaterial] things [of Capital] appear as direct relations between people?[30]

Of course the mode of production changes in a post-Fordist economy, with "things" becoming far more ephemeral and affective, but capitalism remains as its own inherent obstacle.

With regard to Cottington's study, what is apparent is that the logic of the creative industries has recast the history of the avant garde in the terms of what Mark Fisher refers to as a "business ontology," which assumes that everything, from education to health care, should be conceived as a business.[31] This is part of a what Fisher defines as capitalist realism: "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible to imagine a coherent alternative to it."[32] Fisher understands capitalist realism as a kind of post-Fordist equivalent to the Socialist Realism that characterized the sclerotic Soviet regime under the influence of Stalin's teleological reading of historical necessity and the hubris that the Soviet Union had reached the stage of communism defined by Marx. Margaret Thatcher's infamous slogan, "there is no alternative," comes up against the acknowledgement by neoliberals themselves that their policies create economic inequality, do not prevent crises and cannot guarantee prosperity. Regardless, Fisher says, capitalism subsumes all previous history, pretending to deliver us from past ideologies and protecting us from ideological belief itself. Beyond Fredric Jameson's famous diagnosis of postmodernism as the waning of historicity, Fisher adds to this a pervasive sense of exhaustion and political sterility.[33]

Since capitalism no longer has to worry about the Soviet threat, it has all too successfully incorporated the outside, with nothing left to colonize. The consequent processes of self-colonization produces a "precorporation" of subversion, repeating older gestures of rebellion.[34] In this context it is unclear who or what the enemy is and so social problems are accepted as marketable signs of authenticity.

Capitalist realism makes anti-capitalism itself a widely disseminated means to reinforce its ideology. The reason this is possible is because today's capitalism does not require that anyone believe in it. A pervasive post-ideological cynicism structures social reality: we believe that capitalism is nefarious but we continue to participate in exchange.[35] This problem is particularly acute for genuine anti-capitalist social movements, which tend towards reform and political demands rather than presuming to be able to organize system change. The culture of protest is the background noise of capitalist realism, Fisher writes, and it is effective because we continue to believe that the persistence of capitalism is due to evil Oedipal figures rather than to our own complicity in "planetary networks of oppression."[36] While this may seem to indict those people who are concerned with the state of things, their unstated worldview, according to Fisher, is a "reflexive impotence" and "depressive hedonism." Referring to Deleuze's "Postscript," Fisher attributes these neuroses to the cybernetic power of control societies, surveillance, lifelong education and working at home. An example that he gives of the decline of the disciplinary societies defined by Foucault and the rise of control are college students who are allowed to eat and sleep during classes, or send each other emails and play video games on their laptops, aware that their behaviour will not be called into question and that what matters most is to be wired to the matrix. Fisher refers to this retreat into private communicational bliss as "addicted" and "agitated interpassivity," the inability to maintain one's sense of the world as a coherent narrative. This is supplemented by the "liberal communism" of today's captains of industry like George Soros and Bill Gates, which combines huge profits with environmentalism and philanthropy. Further, notions like interconnectivity, commons and sharing economy actually downplay responsibility for social problems since this responsibility is extended to everyone and therefor no-one. The excesses of capitalism can only be overcome by the spontaneity of biopolitical management rather than through leftist centralization and worker control. For "liberal communism," paradoxically, only billionaires are in a position to fight the excesses of capital accumulation.

As for workers, they are obliged under post-Fordism to re-skill and adapt to the new capitalism, placing a premium on flexibility and lateral networks rather than stable jobs and hierarchies.[37] These new conditions, according to Fisher, emerged from the increased cybernetization of the work environment. Whereas Fordist workers were watched by managers during work hours only,

and prevented from talking too much while at work, post-Fordist workers are controlled through the mechanism of communication, with just-in-time production eroding the division between work and everyday life. Conditions of instability and precarity, unstable work patterns and emancipation from the factory mean that anti-capitalist antagonism is no longer situated externally between social classes but internally, in the psychology of the self-motivated and self-directed worker. One of the occupational hazards of this shift is the increase in psychiatric and affective disorders, with a doubling of reported mental problems in the last three decades. Yet the ruling ideology treats this as an individual problem rather than a consequence of the class war.[38]

Elegy for Music

According to Fisher, control by feedback accompanies the postmodern demystification of culture. Another cultural historian who is making use of network theory to rethink the avant garde is musicologist Benjamin Piekut. On the face of it, Piekut's work corresponds to the most general directions in cultural studies, with its focus since the 1980s on identity issues and since the 90s on Deleuzian notions becoming. In his introduction to the edited text *Tomorrow Is the Question: New Directions in Experimental Music Studies*, Piekut argues for the importance of rethinking experimental music in terms of a "useable past for a contemporary music scene that is global, multiethnic, and heterogenous."[39] The music scene is referred to as an international "network" and the promise of research is the possibility of extending the network through pluralist inclusivity across race and ability as means of defining progress. This aims beyond Cottington's "alternative professionalism" and involves artists like Pauline Oliveros, who pioneered music for people with limited mobility and other impairments. For Piekut, the point of music studies is novelty: new questions, new individuals, new relationships, new connections and new materials. One studies not only artists, works and chronologies, but also scores, performances, recordings, recording sessions, interviews, lectures, journals, takes, disks and hard drives.

I return to the question of new materials below, but preface this with Piekut's case study of London's experimental music scene. Piekut's essay, "Indeterminacy, Free Improvisation, and the Mixed Avant-Garde: Experimental Music in London, 1965-1975," traces commonalities among musicians in the "avant-garde network" of this time and place, in particular, the concerts in indeterminate composition and free improvisation organized by Victor Schonfield.[40] Compositional issues had to do with spontaneity, indeterminacy and improvisation within and across this network of artists – which included Evan Parker, Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra, Sun Ra's

Solar Arkestra, Spontaneous Music Ensemble, Musica Elettronica Viva, Art Ensemble of Chicago, Derek Bailey – and the influence of John Cage and Ornette Coleman. In terms of development, Piekut insists that the network was "never centrally controlled" since, in terms of the various objects of study, experimental music "does not exist" but is only a term applied to "certain sections of certain networks" that might otherwise have escaped attention.[41] What is intriguing about this assertion is that whereas music and art do not exist, or are only known retrospectively, networks do exist! In this schema, networks have more ontological certainty than the category of music. To cite Piekut:

> We report on the shape of the network at a given moment in history, rather than issue evaluations about what this or that artist (or musical practice, such as improvisation) belongs in a conversation about experimentalism 'proper.' The value of this kind of empirical work lies in its capacity to challenge accepted acts of scholarly grouping performed by historical actors.[42]

One might think, in relation to Badiou's distinction between being and event, that we are dealing here with being without events in the realm of art, or, to paraphrase Žižek, with a kind of decaffeinated musicology – a substance, music, deprived of its substance. Or to take Žižek's Starbucks example, a product that offers not only coffee but also an ideology. For the price of an expensive cappuccino you can also feel happy that proceeds are being given to Saharan farmers, etc. As Piekut puts this in his own terms: "Exasperated by the continuing absence of Africa from histories of the musical avant-garde? Me too!"[43] The idea, according to Žižek, is that you pay a little extra in order to counteract your guilty feeling of consumerism.[44] In the case of today's musicology, the study and appreciation of music as such is suspect and so must be supplemented with an ideological perspective. However, if there are no events in the realm of music, nor are there any in the realm of politics. The new materialism is the counterpart to the omnipresence of what Badiou calls democratic materialism. Žižek links this phenomenon to the success of liberal communism:

> We should have no illusions: liberal communists are the enemy of every progressive struggle today. All other enemies – religious fundamentalists and terrorists, corrupted and inefficient state bureaucracies – are particular figures whose rise and fall depends on contingent local circumstances. Precisely because they want to resolve all the secondary malfunctions of the global system, liberal communists are the direct embodiment of what is wrong with the system as such. This needs to be borne in mind

> in the midst of the various tactical alliances and compromises one has to make with liberal communists when fighting racism, sexism, and religious obscurantism.[45]

In terms of capitalist realism, we can assess the shift from the disciplinary enclosure of aesthetics to that of cultural, visual and music studies as being related to or affected by the broader framework of the bureaucratization of research. Fisher refers to "bureaucratic anti-production" as the attempt by management to intensify bureaucratic measures as a means to end top-down centralized control.[46] In Piekut's call for more research on ability and global inclusiveness – a research trend that can hardly be limited to this one scholar – it is not only the hegemony of western music that is in question, but music as such. The research excellence criteria of managerial bureaucracies, once analyzed by Bill Readings in terms of the neoliberal university, seek to assess those aspects of performance that are resistant to quantification.[47] As Fisher puts it: "work becomes geared towards the generation of representations rather than to the official goals of the work itself," and thus reverses the priorities of production to its bureaucratic regulation.[48] In terms that are more specific to what is at play in Piekut's musicology, Fisher notes that what is missing here is a big Other, a symbolic order and collective fiction like "experimental music," which is now given the status of virtuality. Yet, we are required to believe in it even when no one else does, least of all the musicologist. This is another feature of capitalist realism: incredulity towards one's own narrative, celebrated by people like Nick Land as a cybernetic weakening of forms of repression and human will, a decentred matrix-network without external guarantees. Just as neoliberal governance is the rule of experts rather than politicians, a deferral of responsibility onto markets, musicology dispenses with aesthetic judgement, refusing the role of critic and gatekeeper, perhaps as compensation for artistic stagnation. The art canon is now deregulated and opened up to free market forces. It is in this context that artificial intelligence, such as the computer-interfaced music of George Lewis or the plant and insect performances of Miya Masaoka, vies with human intelligence.

The wild contingency of networks that Piekut wishes to account for in his study, a Foucauldian set of "external conditions of possibility," as he describes it, is best described in his essay on the usefulness of Actor Network Theory for music historiography.[49] Piekut begins with as broad a definition of music as possible. Going beyond sociologist and former Henry Cow musician Georgina Born's definition of relations between materials and events, Piekut defines music's evanescence in these terms:

> molecules that transfer energy and vibrate in concert; enzymes that produce feelings of anticipation, release, and pleasure;

> technologies of writing, print, phonography, amplification, and digitality to extend 'here and now' to the 'there and then'; instruments that are themselves tangles of labour, craft, and materials; human or machine performers that render text or code into event; archives and repertoires that extend cultural meaning historically; corporal protocols that discipline the performing body; and finally the regimes of material-semiotic meaning that condition each sounding and make it different.[50]

Piekut then acknowledges the slow "creep" of the language of networks into music studies, a phenomenon that he says puts even the category of "society" into question. The task for scholars, however, is equally creepy: to trace all of the "promiscuous associations that spill out across conventional parsings of the world."[51] Piekut mentions in this regard the Museum of Modern Art's interactive online map of "connections" between members of the avant garde that are highlighted in the 2013 exhibition *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925*. By selecting one of the names on the website, say, Kurt Schwitters, one can see that Schwitters was "connected" to Marcel Duchamp and exactly thirteen other well-known artists.[52] As the MoMA site explains, the purpose of the map is to show that abstraction was not the product of "a solitary genius but the product of network thinking," the result of people whose familiarity with one another "could be documented." The question of solitary genius is a tired harangue in the sociology of culture. We know, for instance, that Paul Valéry was a petit bourgeois, but also that not everyone in the petty bourgeoisie was Paul Valéry. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had to eat breakfast like everyone else, but knowing what he had for breakfast does not tell us very much about the significance of *Elective Affinities*. As Janet Wolff writes on this issue:

> Everything we do is located in, and therefore affected by, social structures. It does not follow from this that in order to be free agents we somehow have to liberate ourselves from social structures and act outside them. On the contrary, the existence of these structures and institutions enables any activity on our part, and this applies equally to acts of conformity and acts of rebellion. […] Any concept of 'creativity' which denies this is metaphysical, and cannot be sustained. But the corollary of this line of argument is not that human agents are simply programmed robots, or that we need to take account of their biographical, existential or motivational aspects.[53]

The MoMA's interactive map tells us nothing about Schwitters' relationship to his acolytes nor to the cousin of the neighbour of Tristan Tzara and so on,

but it does point to the potential of today's computational vectors to "render" the life of a contemporary artist or art world social system. Since biopolitical governance places emphasis on self-regulation and self-monitoring, one should not be surprised that artists might begin to create their own interative constellations. At a conference I attended in October 2016, titled "Networked Art Histories," the Montreal artist Martha Fleming gave a power point presentation detailing the people she has worked with in her trajectory as an artist and who in one way or another have been instrumental in her life and work. In terms of the business ontology referred to above, such computational vectors allude to the efficiency standards of today's bureaucracy and the effort, as Fisher says, to quantify affective performance. One thinks of the kinds of problems this can cause, as noticed by the ruling by the U.S. National Labor Relations Board, which stipulates that employers cannot oblige employees to be constantly positive at work.[54] A similar policy would have to be invented that would allow artists and scholars the time and space required to create according to their own genius and according to social needs. However, it is not genius that institutions are interested in, despite the rhetoric of excellence. Prospective university employers now want to know what network of contacts your employment might also encompass so as to enhance the services the school can offer students and better market its educational products. Who's who and who you know become as important as who you are and what you do. Despite the capillary extension of the academic environment, whose synergy is supposed to enhance research, how can one explain the general decline in new major discoveries, and this, despite the exponential growth of academic research? According to David Graeber, the entropy that characterizes today's neoliberal societies is related to the rise of information technologies that allow everything to be simulated. Today's breakthroughs, Graeber says, occur in a technological environment that makes it easier to transfer and reproduce things that already exist.[55]

It is not the neoliberal intensification of control that seems to bother Piekut, ironically, but the fact that it does not go far enough. Beyond a mere inventory of the avant gardist's network of contacts, what we need, he says, is information about institutions, technologies, media, performances, etc. What music studies require, then, is a notion of networks with "greater analytic potential," a research orientation that is best expressed, he argues, by Actor-Network Theory (ANT).[56] ANT is not a typology that maps limits, but a methodology that registers anything that "acts" in a network, whether that something be human, material or discursive. The function of ANT, Piekut says, has nothing partisan or engaged about it, but seeks only to provide "an empirically justified description of historical events."[57] As with Foucault's discourse theory approach to the disappearance of the author, the study of music is extended beyond human agency. Unlike Badiou's use of set theory, the notion of infinite multiplicity

according to ANT is not limited to the ontology of being, but disperses being into the heteronomy of an infinite set of networks, referred to as "differences." An agent need not have intentions or be sentient, as long as it affects a change of any sort. Might ANT, as a new method of research, be dedicated to such "hyper-real" simulations and virtual projections that Graeber associates with new technologies? Has the cybernetic edu-factory become a dead zone of the imagination? Graeber notes that the number of scientific papers, books and patents doubled every fifteen years since the late seventeenth century, but that around 1970 this number began to decline.[58] The reason for this is that the technology that was once associated with alternative futures began to be oriented towards labour discipline and social control, noting that the interest in concepts like governmentality and biopower is due to the fact that the university has become, he says, "an institution dedicated to producing functionaries for an imperial administrative apparatus, operating on a global scale."[59]

The zero claims and bad infinity of ANT's worldlessness do not seem to concern Piekut. In response, one is reminded of Lefebvre's critique of the structuralist sociology of Lucien Goldmann. Goldmann emphasized that artworks are the products of individuals who are members of specific social groups, whose worldviews mediate the consciousness of the artist. The type of "network" that Goldmann would have sought to study, according to Lefebvre, is comparable to a travel diary. The structuralist method begins with the map of all that could have been seen by the traveller and therefore with the complete journey. It may even collect a number of travel journals in order to create a complete picture into which it then inserts individual subjects, and in Piekut's case, objects, materials and discourses. The dialectical method, in contrast, gives relative priority to the contingent, or conjunctural, over the structural. For Lefebvre, structure is a variable, provisional moment of becoming; it is the ensemble of elements that are graspable through concepts, which should include concepts such as music, the artist, the work of art, society and classes, social practices, the level and development of productive forces, but also, failures of consciousness, incomplete knowledge, types of subjectivity and dominant ideologies.[60] Such "agents" as Goethe's breakfast have no priority over diachrony, history and transversality. Moreover, the artist lives in a world of struggles to which his or her work proposes to offer solutions. A work is therefore an artist's worldview and is interpreted by audiences through their own cognition. Whereas for ANT, mediation represents the action of agents, human and/or non-human, for dialectical materialism, mediation explains conditions and limits knowledge. It is a logic of practice, in Bourdieu's terminology, which is not limited in its scope to that of the individual or even the class to which he or she belongs.[61] It is a production of works within and set against alienation, similar to other kinds of productive activity and self-production, yet distinct in its workings. One never produces in a vacuum, or at the level of zero. One

is always already acting in relation to a situation that is never fully determined but nevertheless contingently occupied.

In keeping with ANT, Piekut argues that an object can be an agent. The example he gives is the copy of John Cage's *Silence* that was available in Blackwell's bookshop in Cambridge, where it was purchased by Fred Frith, who was at that time working in the group Henry Cow. The book, according to Piekut, does not communicate Cage's ideas about chance, but speaks directly for Cage in his absence. It results in Frith composing 'Nirvana for Mice,' for which he used playing cards as compositional devices. Ignoring at the outset the fact of the book as a commodity, it is Cage's thinking, I would argue, that is primary, especially insofar as Frith accords it validity and interest – the book itself, regardless of its desirability, is subservient to what it transmits.[62] One may think of a less congenial sonic expression than music as that produced by a prisoner being tortured. His moans and confessions are certainly "agents" in the world of ANT, but they are not musical expressions, not unless one is the most perverse kind of Kantian. For Kant, however, this would not be a matter of enjoyment, but only the object of the most detached assessment – sublime in its horror perhaps rather than beautiful. For Badiou, however, the moan speaks to the corporeal presence of the agent and his voice, the necessary medium for the "transmission of the Idea" and the "full orchestration of subjectivity."[63] For Badiou, without the idea we have only animalized humanity. Its reception is a matter of transference, for example, the way revolutionaries are portrayed by counter-revolutionaries.[64] With capitalism we have identities but we do not have universalism – a war of all against all, devoid of values, and perhaps even a free-for-all of actor-agents, amused to no end with pseudo-problems. The use by Frith of Cage's ideas is not the result of a shopping accident, a scene from a mall, but the result of the way an artistic subject is constituted by his field of practice, with its configuration of works, which alone are able to configure an artistic subjectivity.[65] In Badiou's terms, the truth of Cage's *Silence* is the evental consequence of the mutations of art, a truth to which Frith is receptive as a reader, listener and musician. He is not a tabula rasa but puts forward an affirmative modality within an artistic situation. Piekut's work does not speak to difference but to the crisis of art as conditioned by biocapitalism, a "generalized deconstruction" that, as Badiou says, attempts to "catch hold of the shreds of the real by the formal resources of art."[66]

Working with Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, Piekut reverses Badiou's schema, stating that musical associations "do not hold together because they are true," but rather, are true "because they hold together."[67] Badiou's alternative to the popular French slogan, "tout ce qui bouge n'est pas rouge" (all that has movement is not red) is "tout ce qui bouge n'est pas évènement," meaning that not everything that takes place in society is on the order of an event. For Badiou, much of what takes place in capitalist society, say,

commodity culture as opposed to evental culture, are obscure events, novelties, corruption and disasters that produce no truths and no fidelity. No wonder then that Piekut emphasizes drifts, messiness, surprises and perversions, so as to give a lifeless method a sense of vitality and worldliness. As for effects of race, class, gender, and so on, his references and likings do not go far beyond the usual repertoire of well-known musicians: David Grubbs, Iggy Pop, Harry Partch. If Ali Akbar Khan's *Music of India* is important, it is not particularly important in itself, for itself – at least not based on the example that Piekut provides – but because it influenced La Monte Young, Tony Conrad and the Velvet Underground. As Žižek says concerning the cultural logic of multiculturalism:

> Multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist; he or she does not oppose to the Other the particular values of his or her culture); none the less he or she retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (or depreciate) other particular cultures properly – multiculturalists' respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority.[68]

One cannot fault Piekut for this kind of multicultural blind spot since the "motley of stuff" that ANT champions avoids all politics. ANT circumvents even the smallest of political identifications, fending off subjectivism so as to not be partial to any singular agent of mediation. Does this represent a musicology that is more empirically valid or simply more effective in terms of public relations? The "reflexive impotence" of the music critic plays against and scapegoats the failure of the canon as a disciplinary undertaking. Such protest against the institutions of music seems odd in terms of a now relatively "official" avant-garde experimentalism. For Fisher, this provides no special hermeneutic advantage in terms of human culture but represents the radical unthinkability of the centrelessness of global capitalism. The centre is missing, he says, but we cannot stop searching for it. Is there no agent willing to posit a real passion for music, or does the "alternative professionalism" of today's creative industries mostly create people who do not know what they want or what they like?[69]

For fear that someone might attempt a revolution in music theory, Piekut warns that actors and networks do not stand still long enough for someone to posit something like social and political context. Musical gestures must and can be situated, but networks cannot be known in advance – they are disorderly and so must be discovered with every new effort of research, which brings into play new unforeseen effects. Rather than cultural mediation, Piekut's version

of ANT vacillates between the absolutism of an airtight causality, for which everything can be known, and relativism, for which nothing can be known for sure. This vacillation is the sliding from such subjects as the intentions of actors, social constraints and institutional settings, to political pressure and musical performances, extended as though the different words in a Saussurean language system, yet changing in meaning depending on the historian's particular construction, and thereby leading to nothing more specific than "ontological multiplicities."[70] At the level of method, the subject of the enunciation collapses with the enunciated subject. The native is the ethnographer's mask since even informants are not fully aware. As Piekut puts it: "The ANT scholar is concerned with adding back in these many mediators, whether the historical or ethnographic informant recognizes them or not; in this sense, the analyst maintains a privileged position in tracing the outlines of a given network."[71]

Nor is radical cultural theory any better off. While the scholar can attempt to understand the emergence of networks, and can in the process displace inherited accounts, Piekut says, she cannot make demands of historical reality, inventing wholly new accounts. The stakes of intellectual work are not very clear. To take the issue of race politics, Piekut states that such an analysis would not merely search for evidence of prejudice but could also, for instance, examine housing policy, bodily comportment and styles, or concepts of creativity. The hermeneutics of race analysis would wish to go beyond the hagiography of famous black artists, for instance, in favour of more empirical work, something like an Ornette Coleman museum, allowing us a view of his toothbrush and slippers alongside the appreciation of his music. Such "historical ecologies," whose boundaries are unknown, is a self-fulfilling prophecy that Piekut refers to as "heuristic speculation" about strange worlds.

My Human Gets Me Blues

The self-declared politics of ANT, according to Piekut, is that no actor is ever alone, no network is ever stable, and politics are never fully known.[72] Still, one must make decisions, he admits: "No scholar can include every actor in a historical account […] one must make decisions about which actors to follow, where one draws the boundary lines of relevance."[73] What assumptions, he asks, motivate a research programme? Rather than providing answers to this question, the apparent advantage of ANT is that it is "ontologically indeterminate" and is in keeping, as I have argued, with capitalist realism's "deflationary" view that any positive state is a dangerous illusion.[74] ANT's "reflexive impotence" with regard to radical politics is perhaps better accounted for by going one small step further than Piekut and advancing his interest in non-human actors to that of a full-fledged object-oriented ontology. Based on Žižek's essay, "Objects, Objects Everywhere: A Critique of Object Oriented Ontology,"

ANT could be said to be similar to object-oriented ontology (OOO) insofar as it seems to take us beyond transcendental philosophy and its concern with subjectivity and concept to a direct perception of the life of things.[75]

Like Piekut's method, object-oriented ontology also follows the work of Bruno Latour and seeks to bypass the Kantian break with metaphysics. In his essay, Žižek is intrigued with the 2011 book by Levi Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*, which uses the Lacanian theory of sexual difference to define object-oriented ontology as a feminine non-all without exception. Bryant inverts the Lacanian understanding of social reality for which there is always a remainder, the *objet a*, by making every thing or person into such an object. Ontology is thereby asserted over epistemology and our subjective cognition of the world. For Bryant, the "democracy of objects" expands our explanation of social phenomena like climate change, for example, to include biased media reports, economic pressures and material actors like rotting garbage. Unlike Piekut's "avant-garde network," such objects are not reducible to their relations to other objects. The tension then is between ontology and epistemology. We cannot reduce the object to its significance for humans, but must rather discern the radical unfathomable contingency of reality – a prospect that vies with the epistemological indeterminacy of quantum physics, which states that there is no objective reality that is independent of the observer. In this instance the music of computers and insects is a moot point since there is no interpretive horizon of meaning for which its status as music has any significance.[76] Rather than a split subject, Bryant proposes a divided object that withdraws from accessibility and appears "solipsistic" in that this object perceives other objects only through its own frame. This to me would be the only way to explain Piekut's view that it is the specific copy of Cage's *Silence* that gives significance to Frith's 'Nirvana for Mice.' There is no other way to explain such a pan-transcendentalism of the object and a world that is opaque to itself.

As applied to music, both of these approaches fail to question the ontology of music at an ideological level and instead extend the reach of ontology to all manner of heteronomous things, altogether bypassing the more complex co-dependence and co-implication of art and politics in avant-garde praxis. According to Lacan, however, what social reality offers subjects is quilting points of ideological enjoyment. This raises the stakes for a struggle over theories and histories of the avant garde that are now being recoded as network theory. Žižek explains that what distinguishes OOO from Lacanian theory is the way that Lacan's notion of the Real, which resists symbolization, resides not merely at the level of object, but also in the subjectivity that distorts access to reality.[77] This is one reason why Lacan's work cannot be conflated with Kantianism: the Real disturbs the dichotomy between cognition and phenomenal reality. The Real (das Ding) is not independent of us but is libidinized as a fantasmatic object, referenced in the formula $<drive-desire>a, simultaneously

internal and external. By suggesting that the scholar must make choices, Piekut underestimates the extent to which the subject is the Real. Giving agency to objects is one way to alleviate the anxiety regarding both subjectivity as well as the processes of material reality. As Žižek argues, reduction to race or gender analysis as a mode of music study is inherently reactionary in that it seeks to ground itself in a substantial particularity. Further, one would wish to know in what ways the focus on identities masks the processes of commodification. For Marx, commodity fetishism does not mean identifying only the use values of objects but their exchange values, the formal equality of things that is mediated by the value form. The equivalence that ANT proposes between human and non-human agents is perhaps another way to understand capitalism as its own inherent limitation.

One is tempted here to think about musical language as akin to human language in general, in particular, as this becomes one way to think outside of network logic. Language reflects reality yet is not neutral, but affected by social relations and conflicts. "Language is not only traversed by antagonisms," Žižek writes, "the supreme trauma is that of language itself."[78] The entry into language destabilizes subjective reality in such a way that music becomes a means to articulate psychic turmoil. Because objects never experience the entry into language, they do not have agency. Cage's *Silence* does not speak to Frith. Musical expression, like language, brings about a transcendentally constituted horizon of meaning. The task for a radical theory of music and the avant garde is therefore not to include both human and non-human agents into networks but, as Žižek says, "to bring out the Real of the subject, the way the emergence of subjectivity functions as a cut in the Real."[79] The subject is thus an agent against its own substantiality, which explains why many artists prefer to not have all of their work explained by means of their presupposed identity. Of course the opposite can also be true. There is more to this, however, even in terms of something like structural racism. The Lacanian subject is mediated by *objet a*, never fully itself, always eluding its positivization, least of all in networks. This accounts for something of the infinite possibilities for music, which psychoanalysis helps us to understand as a meaningless yet sublime product of human culture. There is nothing Promethian about this. Žižek writes: "Subject is not somehow more actant than objects, a mega-actant actively positing all the world of fundamentally positive objects, so that against this hubris one should assert the active role of all objects. Subject is at its most fundamental level a certain gesture of passivization, of not-doing, of withdrawal, of passive experience."[80] Music is the activity of constructing a universe of meaning beyond subjectivity, understood at the zero level as the absence of unity and substance – the making of sense out of nonsense, or as Žižek would have it, "total exposure to the disgust of the Real."[81] Capitalist realism in some ways denies us the passivity we need for artistic creation. It

forces us to be creative but without allowing us to tear ourselves out of reality. It wishes people were more like objects, a fantasy of unmediated mediation, obfuscating the Real of subjects.

In relation to Piekut's method, we can now return to the MoMA map to reconsider the points in the network that are supposed to represent human subjects. Subjects are not discrete and punctual. Moreover, and without resorting to Aristotelianism, subjects are always apposite to networks and fully para-nodal, or as Lacan has it, asymptotic. This contrasts with the mid-twentieth century social cybernetics that views the individual as a feedback system that is optimized by psychology and liberal capitalism for a fully transparent society and perfectable system. In relation to the unconscious and the mediations of language, subjects pass in and out of the network of signifiers. The musicology of networks avoids the anxieties, fears and desires that are engendered by the non-substantial inconsistency of *objet a*. What then are the processes that generate the illusions of music as meaningful social experience? These are neither neuronal – "enzymes that produce feelings of anticipation, release, and pleasure" – nor are they discursive positivities.

Some might object that ANT is not the same as OOO, especially since the latter does not assess (art) objects in terms of the networks that they may be associated with. Indeed, the field of so-called "new materialisms" has its different inflections, including Thing Theory (TT), Speculative Realism (SR) and Vibrant Matter (VM). What these varying approaches allow philosophy to do is decentre the human being and apprehend the reality of objects either beyond human intention or in connection with it. Such multiplicity at the level of the ontic and the ontological, however, does not make a world, but returns theory to the level of the relative, which is altogether the standard operating practice of an economically and socially competitive material world, least of all for an art world thrown into crisis by varous factors including the surfeit of markets and theories, and the reigning digital vortex that brings everything imaginable into consideration at once. As D. Graham Burnett suggests in the 2016 *October* journal's questionnaire on materialisms, "[t]he more dematerialized and etherealized our consumerism becomes, the more sweetly nostalgic an emphasis on actual medium-sized dry goods."[82] It is just so much *nostalgie de la boue*, or "narcissistic self-loathing," as he brazenly puts it. Commenting on the stream of vibrant materialism, Andrew Cole argues that by drawing our attention to nonhuman forces and the political agency of objects, and by suggesting that everything is interconnected – with demonstrations of how for example weather affects election results – such non-dialectical materialism repeats the "whodathunk" teachings of popular science magazines.[83] "Method for the sake of method" and "surprises about our crazy and connected world," he argues, effects a weakening of perspective on reality.[84] Taking pride in its exclusion of dialectics, Vibrant Matter reduces everything to flat ontologies and

the equality of everything, thereby destroying politics. Cole makes the point that the age of the Anthropocene may not be such a good occasion to avoid human responsibility and agency. The notion of the avant garde proposes that the same goes for aesthetics, especially insofar as the new materialisms, as Francesca Ferrando says about the brave new world of post-humanism, are not synonymous with the revival of Marxism.[85] The rationale for post-humanism, at least in a critical vein, is to propose the non-hierarchy between the human and non-human, language and matter, observer and observed, technology and the body. Yet nature, as Hegel argues in his *Science of Logic*, does not abide by the rigour of the concept.[86] One can in this sense appreciate the difference between Hippocrates of Kos and Josef Mengele.

Most things in the new materialist universe of system relations come at the expense of reason and progress. What means of resistance are there, then, to the heteronomy of capitalist exchange? The problem for avant-garde art is that artistic resistance is also an answer to the meaninglessness of the void and not always directly in opposition to capitalism. As Roberts argues about art's negative asociality, the negations of art are inexhaustible, in particular with regard to its traditions and institutional determinations, which include the activity of art's production under capitalism.[87] The uses of new materialism in contemporary art theory avoid the avant garde's understanding of art as a force of negation. Moreover, the negation of the negation involves, on the one hand, a reflection on art's conditons of material production, which may coincide with uses of object-oriented materialism, and secondly, art's dynamics as disjuncture from the world as social and political praxis, which involves art's comparability and difference from the heteronomy of things that are non-art. As possible methods for a new art theory and musicology, the new materialisms threaten to effect in advance a self-censorship of the questions of art, in particular, as art comes under increasing pressure to become directly economic. Like postmodern and post-structural theories, the new materialisms eschew not only the avant garde's approach to art as a mediated site of class conflict but also as a renunciative force. Art's negativity is therefore not reducible to the ideologized forms of networks and systems immanentism. Unlike post-humanism and unlike new materialisms, the paths of revolutionary cultural praxis are not infinite, but, as Roberts says concerning the notion of the Hegelian determinate negation, combine the principle of freedom with its alienated Absolute notion. At worst, the new materialisms become new resources for the art system and remain separate from second negation's revelation of art's contingency as a category.[88] However, only dialectical materialism addresses the avant garde's aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason as forms of socialized praxis.

Revolution Everyday

A world in which no one can speak authoritatively about music or about the politics of the avant garde, whether out of deference to postmodern relativism or as a feature of the "reflexive impotence" of capitalist realism, is what Badiou refers to as an "atonal" world that lacks, according to Žižek, a quilting point. A quilting point is "the intervention of a Master-Signifier that imposes a principle of 'ordering' onto the world, the point of a simple decision ('yes or no') in which the confused multiplicity is violently reduced to a 'minimal difference'."[89] The postmodern world, Žižek argues, tries to dispense with the agency of a master signifier, which must be deconstructed, dispersed and disseminated – a desire for atonality, with its politically correct post-politics that avoid the destabilizing features of enjoyment: caffeine-free politics, diet musicology.

How does this atonality operate in the era of post-avant-garde art? In *Your Everyday Art World,* Lane Relyea argues that there has been a shift in the art world from big ideological struggles towards micro-politics and the post-Fordist paradigm.[90] The shift towards more horizontal and networked models of sociality has since at least the 1960s and 70s replaced hierarchical, routine, institutional, official, continuous, restrictive, spectacular, canonical and art critical structures, with that of do-it-yourself, collective, short-term, temporary, underpaid, creative, action-oriented, externalized, freelance, flexible, recombinant, immersive, context-dependent, minor, embedded, open, deterritorialized, nomadic, mobile, loose, affective, impromptu, relational, connective, informal, intimate, interchangeable, collaborative and participatory structures that are consonant with the flow of information and economic circulation. These are more than simply a set of neat oppositions that have been deconstructed. On the contrary, as deconstruction teaches, these oppositions are fully hierarchized, even if the traditional hierarchy has been reversed: horizontality over verticality. Relyea suggests that today's immanentism implies that we cannot simply celebrate the end of mass culture and its ideology – bureaucracy, white cube standardization, authority and institutions – since this also reflects the managerial ethics of neoliberalism. In Readings' words, today's socialized connectivity is also "the moment of technology's self-reflection."[91] Relyea puts forward a paradox: "the move beyond the autonomous art object made in the name of critique and politicization would now grant cover for a depoliticization."[92]

According to network theorists, effectiveness in a network society implies not having too much autonomy and not assuming too much solidarity, maintaining informal contacts without the stress of familiarity. In the art world, the shift from an art system – with its routinized set of artists, studios, galleries, museums, journals and magazines – to that of capillary networks nevertheless creates new forms of hierarchy and new demands. These injunctions are presented by today's neoliberal institutions and by those who play by the current

rules of the art game as inherently more sociable, more radical and more subversive than anything that came before. Yet, after decades of neoliberal attacks on public infrastructure, organized labour and social policy, precarious "no-collar" workers are submitted to more free market chaos than their Fordist predecessors. As Brian Massumi argues, the neoliberal capitalist overcoming of the logic of totalizing normality and promotion of a logic of erratic excess poses problems for radical politics:

> The more varied, and even erratic, the better. Normalcy starts to lose its hold. The regularities start to loosen. This loosening of normalcy is part of capitalism's dynamic. It's not a simple liberation. It's capitalism's own form of power. It's no longer disciplinary institutional power that defines everything, it's capitalism's power to produce variety – because markets get saturated. Produce variety and you produce a niche market. The oddest of affective tendencies are okay – as long as they pay. Capitalism starts intensifying or diversifying affect, but only to extract surplus-value. It hijacks in order to intensify profit potential. It literally valorizes affect. The capitalist logic of surplus-value production starts to take over the relational field that is also the domain of political ecology, the ethical field of resistance to identity and predictable paths. It's very troubling and confusing, because it seems to me that there's been a certain kind of convergence between the dynamic of capitalist power and the dynamic of resistance.[93]

Capitalism has appropriated resistance, but what, Žižek asks, was this resistance that once went by the name revolution?

We could in this case return to Gordon-Nesbitt's book on Cuban cultural policy. The book presents the case of Cuba as "an antidote to neoliberalism" and the latter's withdrawal of state funding in favour of market forces. Her book does not answer all of the questions regarding non-representative non-state-based forms of constituent power, or even new questions having to do with globalization, financialization and new communications technologies, but it does present a model of what is possible when culture and society, as well as the state, are approached in a way that is different from neoliberal capitalism. It is interesting to mention not only the prominence in this case of Cuban writers and filmmakers, but also the development of courses for amateur "aficionado" artists, bringing art education and literacy to communities hitherto excluded from the urban middle-class culture of Havana. In the years following the Revolution, the support of the Soviet Union was both necessary and a hindrance to the development of Cuban cultural policy. While the

revolutionary government affirmed the centrality of culture to the Revolution, the leadership of the National Council of Culture sought to give to politics the last word on culture by emphasizing a paradoxical Marxist orthodoxy whereby art is entirely determined by the economic context, dismissing all art that is produced under capitalism and creating specific expectations for the art produced under socialism. Gordon-Nesbitt recounts that the CNC, having conceded to (bourgeois) utilitarianism, soon came into conflict with the country's intellectuals. Consequently, the orthodox interpretations of the CNC were replaced by the humanist Marxism of the Ministry of Culture, established in 1976. MINCULT had a far more successful policy orientation, working in tandem with the union of writers and artists, creating greater tolerance and engendering a less dogmatic outlook. MINCULT was mindful of how totalitarian regimes of both the Nazi Right and the Stalinist Left had treated avant-garde artists like Bertolt Brecht as decadent modernists. MINCULT reflected some of the ideals of Fidel Castro's 1961 "Words to the Intellectuals," which argued that the revolution defends freedom, that the revolutionary artist has a paramount concern for the people and puts the goals of socialist society above his or her own creative spirit, ready to sacrifice their artistic calling if necessary. For Castro, artists should be allowed freedom in art, even those non-partisan artists who were shaken by the Revolution, ending his speech with the caveat: "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing." This, Gordon-Nesbitt argues, was a similar policy to that of Lenin's Bolsheviks: full freedom of expression, except when in conflict with the party. Among artists and intellectuals, it was agreed in Cuba that art is a social phenomenon and that the formal categories of art do not have an inherent class character – art must serve the Revolution but it cannot be limited to educative and propaganda purposes.

The point of Gordon-Nesbitt's book is that the conditions pertaining to the art system in a socialist society in the 1960s and 70s are very different from those that artists live with in a world of capitalist realism. The contradiction at the heart of the Cuban experiment was that the freedom of artistic experimentation was conditioned by the need to struggle against class enemies and imperialism, in particular the less than benign power of the United States. Although one might argue that the prefigurative politics of today's activist multitudes have nothing in common with communist dictatorship, they seem to me to be consistent with the ideals of the Cuban Revolution and the ideas of someone like Roberto Fernandez Retamar, who held that the diversity between the different kinds of practices is underwritten by a unity that is realized at the frontiers of paper and ink (and today in the digital clouds). What the two have in common is the view that many of today's vanguard artists are also at the political vanguard and reject, as Gordon-Nesbitt describes it, "the crimes, conventions, codes and hypocrisy of the corrupt capitalist world."[94]

Who speaks of revolution today, beyond the democratic socialism of wealth redistribution? The success and failure of the Bernie Sanders campaign is the most likely scenario, it seems, for leftist politics in these neoliberal times. The fact that Sanders could run a successful campaign for the Democratic Party nomination in 2016 under the slogan of political revolution and democratic socialism is nevertheless proof enough that people care about political issues, including wealth inequality, inadequate wages, social welfare, student debt, affordable health care, environmental protection, sustainable energy, job creation, world peace, criminal justice reform, police accountability, immigration reform, voting rights, and free and open elections. We cannot simply idealize the labour of workers but must organize it in the direction of political revolution. Such organization may very well repeat the twentieth century in the sense that the Haitian Revolution repeated the French Revolution, and not necessarily waiting for the perfect prefigurative conditions to be in place. Avant-garde praxis, as it pertains to culture and politics, may therefore also be networked, in the most mundane sense of the word. Revolutionary aspirations continue despite past failures and despite the misguided efforts of capitalist realists to save us from ourselves.

The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted. Cairo graffito, November 29, 2011.
Photo by Gigi Ibrahim. CC BY 2.0. Tag created by Tim Dunn.

FOUR

SOCIALITY AND THE NEW ORGANIZATIONS

We're already a cyborg. You have a digital version of yourself online in the form of your emails and your social media. You have more power than the President of the United States had twenty years ago… The Neuralace implant would be some sort of direct cortical interface […] if we can figure out how to establish a high bandwidth neural interface with your digital self.
– Elon Musk, CEO of Neuralink

We leave aside the living body as network, system of systems, hierarchy of self-regulations, as well as the cortex, organ of accumulation, experience and memory. […] If we grasp creative capacity in human history using the terms 'praxis' and 'poiesis,' we are not seeking to construct an ontology under this cover. We must not 'ontologize' history.
– Henri Lefebvre, *Metaphilosophy*

The critique of cybernanthropy that one finds in the work of Lefebvre, Berardi, the Invisible Committee and others raises a number of problems for any unmediated appropriation of network logic, either for political purposes, or even as a feature of everyday life. Raoul Vaneigem, a core member of the Situationist International, appropriated Lefebvre's late 1940s concept of everyday life in his 1967 tract *The Revolution of Everyday Life*.[1]

Vaneigem's work from the late 60s provides an unexpected window on contemporary networked activism. In the field of contemporary art, such 'netivism' and 'artivism' go by the more general term social practice art. The notion of a "social turn" was proposed by Claire Bishop in her critique of the relational aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud and the dialogical aesthetics of Grant Kester, which are two models of contemporary collaborative art.[2] Much writing has already been dedicated to the theorization and description of these kinds of practices, which since at least the 1990s have grown exponentially in number and are now taught in university study programmes and dedicated journals.[3] What is the relation of the avant garde hypothesis to networked contemporary art forms? What does the social signify in a technologically and biopolitically mediated set of relations? Why have the more anodyne aspects of relational, community and participatory art turned to more expressly politicized forms of engagement and collectivism? Vaneigem was in many ways prescient when in 1967 he deemed the Situationists to be a model organization of the future society. Looking back, we can take from *The Revolution of Everyday Life* some valuable concepts that remain relevant today.[4]

Masters Without Slaves

The distinguishing feature of Situationist writing is its combination of the rigorous study of alienation under capitalist social relations and the possibilities for disalienation through both organized resistance and through notions of play and festival. The human capacity for creativity and play, the propensity for pleasure and the desire to live life to its fullest is set against the conditions of work and political authority, which Guy Debord had described as the "integrated" spectacle of state planning in the Eastern bloc countries and in the West as the "diffuse" spectacle of consumerism, both of them deemed the falsification of an authentic society.[5] The student and worker revolt of 1968, in which the Situationists were directly involved, promised a new life of passion and intensity, disalienated from both political and advertising propaganda. The two concepts that are most pertinent to my discussion here is that of survival, or what Vaneigem referred to more exactly as "survival sickness," and that of subjective autonomy. Like Lefebvre, Vaneigem decried the controlled, technologized and cyberneticized mediations that alienate individuals from themselves, from their desires, dreams and will to live. In societies of control, people can imagine little more than their survival: "The man of survival is the man ground up in the machinery of hierarchical power, caught in a net of interferences, a chaos of oppressive techniques whose ordering only awaits patient programming by programmed experts."[6] Although contemporary theory might associate such ideas with an outmoded one-dimensional mass culture critique, Vaneigem's work retains much of its veracity because of its dialectical

nuance, and like Lefebvre, he was concerned to show the contradictions of the processes through which exploitation was extending to the spheres of daily life, creativity and leisure. The consequence of this was that capitalist planning made sociality itself a form of exploitation. "Today, the more man is a social being," writes Vaneigem, "the more he is an object."[7] The political forms of organization that respond to this condition are themselves "rackets" and "irrelevant struggles," especially and insofar as they are directed against the individual. Unlike today's discourse theory-oriented cultural studies, Vaneigem proposed the critique of power – viewed as a permanent blackmail – rather than its adulation as an effervescent, trans-individual and molecular continuum. It is his emphasis on subjectivity that brought him to define revolution as both individual and collective, without the individual's needs and desires being defined by the needs of productivity and state ideology.

Vaneigem advocated neither individualism nor communitarian collectivism, and insisted that revolution belongs to the proletarian masses. The problem was that the consumer society had caused the gradual disappearance of the proletariat, leading to survivalism through both work and consumption. The cybernetic project might be hijacked, he thought, but the organization of technology had mostly imposed alienation through technocratic management. In more progressive circles, theory threatened to become mere speculation, or ideology, and practice turned into the mindless activism of militants who fetishize action and thereby allow others to think for them.[8] If autonomy and self-realization was to mean anything it would have to be collective and radical and not a practice that makes the transformation of the everyday an aesthetic project. Vaneigem's critique of happenings in this sense could be applied to today's relational aesthetics and the ways in which the collapse of art and life plays into the cyberneticians' requirements of a spectatorless spectacle.

A contemporary instance of living life as aesthetics can be found in Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher's assessment of *Nuit Blanche*, for which, as they put it, "the traditional Debordian theorization of the spectacle's audience as passive and alienated is contradicted by the vitality and camaraderie of those partaking of *Nuit Blanche*'s carnivalesque reconfiguration of the city."[9] The most that Drobnick and Fisher can say about this reconfiguration is that it gives evidence of conflicting agendas between funding sources, commercial agents, local governments, corporate sponsors, arts organizations and participating artists, all of these coming together to "assure a multitude of experiences in the hundred or so installations and performances."[10] The authors admit that they do not know whether such "creative city" programming is "instrumentalizing or progressive."[11] With the neoliberal city as the setting for networked programming, the playful inanities of the flash mobber can be perceived as actions that not only entail participatory entertainment and sociability, but that also, according to Cayley Sorochan, reinforce a depoliticizing cynicism

that accepts democratized surveillance.[12] Vaneigem's retort is that because the spectacle has to be everywhere, it becomes "diluted and self-contradictory."[13]

Today's spectacle of relationality as an "aesthetic of nothingness" is the contradictory expression of the capitalist project and its reflection of the interchangeability of players in an abstract network. It remains to be seen whether the masses have been fully absorbed into the spectacle, or whether the universally excluded "part of no part" might represent an exception to the social order.[14] In Vaneigem's estimation, the revolutionary spirit had become reformist, prone to survival sickness and spurious opposition (fascism, philistine apoliticism, mediocracy, activism, boy-scoutism, ideological masturbation). He reserved his fiercest criticism for cybernetic power, defined as the form of hierarchical social organization that in the modern world has replaced the feudal power of domination and the bourgeois power of exploitation. Cybernetic power confuses the condition of power and powerlessness. The state of things in a cybernetic world is the objectivity of what can be planned, an inhuman rationalization of daily life, which, according to him, represents not the failings of a particular leader, but the failure of an abstract system of programmed social relations.

Against the cybernetic order of control societies, Vaneigem proposed that revolutionary groups would need to be formed. These cells or micro-societies would create areas where social conditioning would be reduced to zero. They would follow their impulses and distinguish themselves from those who succumb to machine logic. Any subjectivity that can develop in such groupings would not be decided by the members but only by the individual, who acts with and for others. "So far," Vaneigem writes, "the Situationist International has been the only group ready to defend radical subjectivity at all costs."[15] Whether or not this is accurate, we can say that they at least thought about it. Whereas one might speculate that mere subjectivity is what Badiou refers to as spurious infinity, for both Badiou and Vaneigem, radical subjectivity in no way ignores the question of politics and the problems of any situation. Writing decades before the computer revolution, Vaneigem refers to networks in a way that to us retains the value of the term: "Where is the radical core, the qualitative dimension? This question has the power to shatter habits of mind and habits of life; and it has a part to play in the strategy of transcendence, in the building of new networks of radical resistance."[16]

Social Capital Explained

Like most radical thinkers who emerged in the 1960s, Vaneigem was weary of the reduction of Marxist theory into a reified Soviet orthodoxy and so followed those who sought to renew radicalism by setting it on a different path. As with the Frankfurt School intellectuals, his work reflects the humanism of Marx's

early writings but not without discerning the ways in which historical reality and power had resulted in the renunciation of humanity. Consequently, he saw radical art, from Stéphane Mallarmé to Alfred Jarry to Dada, as so many efforts to transcend the process of disintegration.[17] Since the 1980s, after the rise of neoliberalism and the official collapse of the Soviet Union, most people who have achieved critical success have learned in one way or another, for one reason or another, to downplay talk of working-class struggle and communist revolution.[18] The return of History and political economy in the art world is therefore not without its competing returns to postmodernism.[19] The more generalized conditions of popular culture, counterculture, subcultures and culture camp have made the growing ranks of the creative class into a precarious neo-bohemia. In an essay on the California-based artist Janet Kim, Chris Kraus writes appreciatively of just such a "timeless bohemia" in a way that brings many of the issues addressed so far into one particular art scene that combines individuality, creativity, collectivism, sociality, capitalism and networks.[20] Kraus's study is an engaging account of the ways in which creativity is pressured by capitalist disintegration.

Janet Kim is the creator of a storefront called Tiny Creatures, which she opened in 2006, during the Bush years, and which closed less than two years later. The story of Tiny Creatures reads almost like the MoMA map of artist networks, with new players representing a timeless picture of the alternative networks of the avant garde, as Cottington would understand it. The location of Tiny Creatures is Echo Park, a neighbourhood in Los Angeles known for its history of immigrant families and conversion into an art district. Tiny Creatures began as an indie record label that featured L.A. post-punk underground bands and which was started by Kim and her boyfriend Ben White. It was designed to be amateur, artist-run, communal and altruistic. What makes Tiny Creatures significant for Kraus is that a small group of friends managed to transform the L.A. art scene, with *The Los Angeles Times* and *Artforum* reporting on its activities and with crowds, celebrities, dealers and curators attending its openings. Despite this background of fame and consecration, its story has in principle to do more with sociality than anything else.

Trained in music, Kim played keyboards in various bands. In 2005 she met White, who organized an underground club night called Part Time Punks. Through White, Kim met the musicians Matt Fishbeck (of the band Holy Shit), Ariel Pink (Haunted Graffiti), Rachel Detroit and Geneva Jacuzzi (Bubonic Plague). Fishbeck soon invited Kim to play drums in his band and she later started her own group called Softboiled Eggies. These post-punk groups could be variously described as indie-rock, lo-fi, experimental or noise pop. Kim recounts how Tiny Creatures went from being a music studio and living space to a gallery:

> I realized I'd found people who I felt I could dream with […] it had been this dream of mine, to be a part of an underground scene like the Dadaists, the Beats, John Cage, and the Happenings. […] And it was like, most of these people around me now also *did art*. I'd moved into the space with the intention of fooling around and sharing ideas and I thought, OK, we're gonna use it to show our art work! I knew that people wanted to meet other people. Just from hanging out with them, I knew this group of musicians had very great artistic inclinations, not just music but visual art, performance, and writing, and I thought it would be great to just share that.[21]

For the first exhibition Kim showed the work of her friends Ariel Pink and Andrew Arduini. The next show featured the work of Fishbeck, Ellen Nguyen, Rubiez and Rubiez – people who were in either the underground music scene or the L.A. art school circuit. While its primary audience of peers is described by Rachel Detroit as "a club of cool people," Kraus emphasizes how this group of friends interviewed and reviewed each other's work, but simultaneously rejected the notion of careers and success. Her descriptions of various opening events reflect the riches of an art scene: who was there, what was shown, art made on a DIY shoestring budget, drug use, artists who don't show up for their own openings, band performances, how late they all stayed up, etc.

All of these things relate directly to what Vaneigem means when he talks about individual self-realization and efforts to disalienate everyday life, but they equally reveal the problems of programmed existence. In contrast to Vaneigem, Kraus would seem to think that whatever revolutionary hopes exist, they would be found in this sort of nucleus of friends and their efforts to evade the conditions of the spectacle. The rules of art, however, are shown to apply in even lo-fi networks, where getting a show means being part of the right crowd. Shows come from having connections and friends mean networks of friends. The third exhibition at this small venue was curated by a young punk band, the children of Valley lawyers and doctors. Indie musician Devandra Banhardt brought people from New York to the show. In time, the activities of Tiny Creatures expanded to include zines, film screenings, yard sales, beer fests, record release parties and theory symposia. The fourth show presented the work of the successful illustrator Jason Yates, who had done his MFA with Mike Kelley and Mayo Thompson at the Art Centre. The show represents the stage at which Tiny Creatures begins to become a commercial space, even though Kim resisted the pressure to give in to survival syndrome. The presence of drugs, prostitutes, money and fights, theft and accusations of snobbish exclusivity led Kim to write the "lo-fi" Tiny Creatures Manifesto, which emphasizes individuality, community, sharing and feeling, a document that artists needed

to sign if they wanted to show in the gallery. Punks, bikers, skaters and vegans were invited to exhibit, as were others from the area's art and music scenes. Kim's effort to evade commercialism led to financial problems that eventually led to the demise of the gallery. But the economic issues did not completely outweigh the question of sociality. As Kim recalls:

> It was supposed to be just a bunch of friends. By then I was old enough to realize if this goes on we're gonna be fucked, we're gonna be homeless. Real estate was just out of control… Drugs added to the excitement of the place. I don't know if I would have done anything different. But it had to stop.[22]

Kim decided to close the space with a final show of works by 26 artists – amateurs, local youths, students, professional artists and architects. As she put it, Tiny Creatures "refused to be big."[23] Whereas Kraus finishes this story where its participants left it – i.e. with Jacuzzi stating: "It was fun, it was a good time. It was hip for a minute in Echo Park." – it is difficult to ignore the fact that it probably would not be a story of resistance if it never had gotten as big as it did.[24]

The "structural invisibility" of what Gregory Sholette describes as the shadowy cybernetic energy and productivity of the "dark matter" of the art world – the mass of unknown artists, peer-to-peer networks of support, outsider artists, informal micro-institutions, non-institutional and self-organized practices that reject art world values – is gaining in visibility for a global capitalist "enterprise culture," with its neoliberal demand and creative mining technology that turns such dark matter as Tiny Creatures into "an open vault of ideas, desires, hopes and frustrations."[25] Sholette proposes that dark matter should turn the tables on the official art world and demand a "sustainable political culture of the Left."[26] This, however, is probably not what Janet Kim had in mind when she wrote her manifesto.[27] For postmodernists, to think in the Marxian terms of an art strike would be to return to the organic model of a system, with a foreground and a background space. What we now have instead, according to Lane Relyea, are networks in which such dark matter finds greater organizational and professional coherence.[28] In these terms it would seem that Kim simply preferred being a musician to that of a gallerist. Relyea's writing, nevertheless, insightfully addresses the changed working environment for those artists who experienced the transition from the 1990s to the 2000s: "Objects, events, and locations that just recently were considered singular or isolated now thoroughly bleed into and out of an expansive international circuitry that itself has little sense of borders."[29] Art shifts from art world enclaves, or from tiny hipster scenes, towards a networked connectivity in which, he says, subjectivity is increasingly reduced to economic processes and "just-in-time"

turmoil.[30] In Pascal Gielen's estimation, art scenes, unlike subcultures that are based on strict identity markers, are an "ideal form of social organization in a network society" because their post-Fordist features – flexibility, mobility, hyper-communication, affectivity – allow them to interact easily with worldwide networks that are subject to biopolitical control.[31]

Relyea says that he wrote *Your Everyday Art World* as "mea culpa" for his own sort of Tiny Creatures adventure as editor of the Minneapolis magazine *Artpaper* as well as his celebration of the slacker ethos as a university instructor and writer for *Artforum*. His association of DIY with '68 alienation and creativity, he says, allowed "indie" subculture and "overbaked micronetworks" to merge with the neoliberal creative industries.[32] His thesis is that being an autonomous or atomized DIY underground artist has come to overlap with being a networked action-oriented free agent. The decisive issue, for him, in the context of post-Fordism, is the centrality of networked connectivity. All cultural production, he argues, is today shaped by the logic of networks. Hardly a form of subcultural resistance, networks are part of capitalist restructuring and largely derive from the mainstream business policies of the 1980s. The logic of networks is that sociality becomes commodified through services, information and through the various ways in which productivity is connected to economic growth and profit. Fantasies of being hypermobile, recombinant or nomadic, he says, are today's romantic myths. The purpose of such postmodern existence is to accumulate prestige, information, contacts and connections. In the game of networks, "everything that actively networks is itself networked in turn."[33]

One of the keywords to have emerged in the context of the networked art world is that of the project. Projects like Tiny Creatures are typical of networks. Platforms, on the other hand, allow projects to become infrastructures. Unlike institutions, platforms are decentralized forms of coordination, used most typically in business environments where just-in-time production requires the management of mobile and shifting commitments. Like computer networks, platforms are loose, flexible, permeable, performative and responsive. Relyea argues that platforms and post-studio projects have replaced the previously closed forms of the art world and characterize the shift towards a more networked structure that combines decentralization with integration (a distributed network model, one assumes). Since cultural institutions are part of this logic, the weak ties of social networks are fast becoming institutionalized. Casualness, immediacy and autonomy are marketed to students and publics. In Relyea's interpretation, the everyday is now itself a platform, a "flexible space of just-in-time improvisation."[34] No wonder then that living spaces, like Kim's music studio apartment, can so easily shift into exhibition spaces.[35] What is specific to network culture's blurring of art and life is the absence of ideological contestation. What is more important than politics in a network culture is connectivity and group involvement. While this might

seem to realize the human need for social meaning and social interaction, the non-institutional and non-permanent aspects of networked sociality simultaneously individualize and deconstruct. Flexible contacts and spectacular events fragment publics and renounce any totalizing views through which to understand social relationships. Anonymity and calculated programming connects directly with face-to-face exchange and social engagement. Sociality, we could say, becomes the raw material of the networked mode of production, now made reflexive through relational aesthetics, sold by galleries and advertised by art schools.[36] If spontaneity and creativity no longer mean what they did in Vaneigem's day, survivalism remains. In the absence of social solidarity, as Relyea puts it, the social becomes conditioned by the personal management of risk and survival. Relationships become tactical connections, loose and disembedded, opportunistic, communicative, nepotistic and contextual. Networked sociality thus emphasizes exchange relations rather than social reproduction. The permanence and omnipresence of network connections exist in inverse proportion to the short-term nature of social relations and projects.

Geert Lovink refers to this networked sociality as a "social media abyss" and believes that negations of network culture are certain to emerge, even if it is unknown at this time what will replace it.[37] Understanding the political economy of "platform capitalism," he argues, will not provide an ideological programme. Lovink calls instead for peer-to-peer solidarity, web sociology and techno-psycho-analysis – forms of resistance that can translate between programmers and the habits of clueless users. Aware of the need for infrastructure and the problem of social reproduction, he writes:

> It is all very well to dream of swarms and proclaim the networked multitude (and warn of its dark side), but it is equally important to design new forms of sociality that harness these energies, for instance in 'collective awareness platforms' that emphasize long-term collaboration over spontaneous one-off gatherings.[38]

Lovink proposes scalable local organizations that can respond to events but that also have a long-term agenda. His social logic, however, maps directly onto programming logic, stating that political principles can be made into code. However, such technology-based logic is in theoretical and practical terms a similar mistake as economic reductionism. Lovink argues that the interfacing of the social and technology begins with cybernetics and continues into the 90s with progressive computing, the sociology of Manuel Castells and the human dynamics of Actor Network Theory. As is the case with discourse theory, the social for Lovink does not exist as such but emerges through digital networks. The real question for him is whether social and class consciousness

can arise from within the digital, electronic realm and influence world events, transforming contacts into comrades. Aware that such networks are increasingly disconnected from traditional communities and institutions, the social seems today like so much capitalist abstraction and fragmentation: platforms, mobs, swarms, trolls, nodes, hubs, bots, data, memes, algorithms, defaults, weak ties and long tails. The culture of digital networks has engineered a civilizational regime change: the social is now the network. Lovink argues that we will likely look back on the Oughts as not only the social media decade but the decade of non-togetherness.

Due to the vagaries of networked existence, the social turn in contemporary art has shifted dramatically towards politicized challenges to the technocratic order. One of the most well-known curators of socially engaged art is Nato Thompson. As a curator at MASS MoCA, Thompson co-edited with Sholette the catalogue for the groundbreaking exhibition *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere* (2004-2005), and as the chief curator of Creative Time, he edited the massive anthology *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*.[39] His 2015 book, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century*, is a detailed discussion of the issues that define activist art.[40] *Seeing Power* discusses the work of the Situationists, Critical Art Ensemble, REPOhistory, W.A.G.E., Thomas Hirschhorn, Superflex, Tania Bruguera, Paul Chan, WochenKlausur, Yomango, William Pope L., Rick Lowe, Laurie Jo Reynolds, Center for Land Use Interpretation, Trevor Paglen, as well as social movements like the *indignados*, Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter. *Seeing Power* is not a typical book about art and politics, but rather a combination of philosophy and practice, with observations based on twenty years of immersion in the activist milieu and the alternative spaces of the art world. It is clear from the outset that for Thompson the purpose of conjoining activism with art is to bring about progressive social change. For this reason, the capitalist system is throughout the text an ominous presence affecting all social institutions and in particular that of cultural production.

One of the main points of Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* is that the postwar neo-avant gardes failed to sublate art into life in a revolutionary manner and that instead this overcoming of the contradiction was effected by what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno referred to as the "culture industry."[41] *Seeing Power* makes a similar assessment of the difficulties that have confronted the kinds of activist art that emerged in the mid-to-late 1990s. Referred to variously as tactical medial, socially engaged art, social practice art and Thompson's own "social aesthetics," such practices have had to confront the problems of commodification and capitalist work relations that have affected avant-garde movements since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Thompson is therefore consistent throughout the book in understanding artistic labour and cultural consumption in terms of the contradictions of capitalism. This for him is a

condition that cannot be escaped. What concerns him instead is capitalism's "ecstatic devotion" to cultural production and its overwhelming ability to absorb anything that reacts against it.[42] What has replaced revolutionary impulses in the postwar period, he argues, are countercultural movements, consumer trends and people organized around new identities and lifestyles. All of these intermingle with the culture and creative industries in such a way that political resistance becomes more difficult. For Thompson, the only advantage in this situation is that this total co-optation allows us to "see power" with greater clarity.[43] The packaging and reselling of signifiers of resistance indicates a paradoxical recognition of alternatives. Thompson therefore situates his thinking as a post-politics for which there is no alternative to capitalism. Changing terms from "culture industry" to the more positive "creative industries" only serves to indicate the extent to which culture and capital are increasingly co-implicated.

Whereas the critical task for activist artists, Thompson says, is to create more effective and affective forms of activism, one is left with the difficulty that arises when critical cultural theory has abandoned revolution, class struggle, dialectics, negation, mediation and the concept of totality, in favour of a more "realistic" notion of cooperation, attempting to transform the system from within – through spatial occupations, non-hierarchical organizing and anti-branding – rather than from without, through vanguards, radical political parties, workplace democracy and ideology critique. His approach you could say is similar to Lovink's in the sense that while Lovink sees society emerging through new modes of technical production, Thompson sees it emerging through activist infrastructures and social practice art. The two are not the same to the extent that the networked mode of production has a greater capacity to condition art practice. For this reason, as well as the more general problem of exploitation, Thompson calls on activists to build organizational capacity through sustainable alternative spaces, or "infrastructures of resonance," thereby marking a shift from temporary tactical actions to long-term strategic structures that can also act as "transversal" sites of becoming.[44] In this sense, new groups like Gulf Labor are picking up where people organized around Art Workers Coalition left off in the late 1960s. If the world is full of complicated and elusive bureaucracies that shape our lives, then these spaces can be occupied, reclaimed or created from the ground up in such a way that their impact can accommodate new forms of collective intersubjectivity. New infrastructures like the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* or 16 Beaver give themselves the power to legitimate practices and lend activist artists the kind of recognition they may not otherwise receive in the mainstream media and major art institutions. Thompson's personal experiences living in a student co-op in Berkeley and working with Temporary Services in Chicago give an inkling that art institutions need not be run like businesses but could instead be more integrated with everyday life, and with the need for communion with

others through mutual networks. He writes: "This ability to read a phenomenon based on the infrastructures of resonance around it is what I refer to as seeing power."[45] Thompson's experience as a high-level curator allows for some understanding of the failings of what he refers to as the "nonprofit industrial complex," with its increasingly conservative values and financial pressures.[46] New infrastructures might therefore legitimate activist practices while at the same time provide added social capital for its users.

One of the intellectual reference points for Thompson's book is Pierre Bourdieu. One gets a sense of Bourdieu's influence when Thompson addresses the suspicion that activists tend to show towards socially engaged artworks that are ambiguous and elusive rather than straightforward and didactic. It so happens that the dichotomy that is used to structure his argument corresponds in Bourdieu's analysis to the class *habitus* (dispositions) of the middle and working classes. Of course, as a result of more widespread cultural education, the traditional markers of class distinction are no longer as obvious as they were in the 1970s. Nevertheless, the habits of class structure remain, and so the dynamic between artists' preference for the ambiguous and activists' preference for the didactic has to be addressed. Thompson argues that didactic means may in some cases reach a more complex level of ambiguity where viewers have to decide for themselves the meaning of a work. When the intentions of an artist are not legible, the gap between the artist and the audience may widen, but this at least allows the work to escape singular interpretations. Infrastructures of solidarity, he argues, benefit the ambiguous artistic gesture by couching it in a world of discovery and social connection rather than the underlying neoliberal economy.

Thompson's insight is that in an unambiguous world of exchange relations and media manipulation, an atmosphere of "visual suspicion" is created in which people become paranoid and mistrustful.[47] Social networking sites in this regard promote ideas of friendship and connectedness but do so to serve market purposes. The only alternative is to trust those people you know and the value acquired through friendship, which can be partly verified by the particular networks or infrastructures in which they operate. Thompson thus refers to both a condition of paranoia, induced by capitalist deterritorialization, and a consequent mastery of the rules of the game of art and politics through the acquisition of what Bourdieu defined as social and cultural capital. In contrast to Žižek's discussion of the weakening of symbolic efficiency and the interpassivity of belief – what results in a situation in which the social rules cannot be fully known or are always changing – Thompson opts for a somewhat more naive theory of paranoia. Unlike Bourdieu, who developed his ideas on social and cultural capital as means to go beyond vulgar materialism, Thompson is more deterministic in his emphasis on how the quantitative expansion of exchange relations and the fact of co-optation make social capital

the object of paranoia. Here too, however, there is a saving grace for living as capitalist form. When one's authentic street cred and radical merits are offered up to bigger institutions and subsumed by capitalism, when social networking and the accumulation of social capital become necessary for survival in a world with more social demands and fewer employment opportunities, we might, he suggests, ease up on denunciations of careerism and selling out. Since the logic of neoliberalism is to set people against one another, Thompson argues, politically minded people should work to build trust and social cohesion rather than satisfy themselves with call outs, witch hunts and purges.[48] The activist artist who can build social capital and better navigate more networks and infrastructures has a better chance of affecting social change. This is not simply a matter of calculation, but involves emotional relationality and respect in order to build confidence through market-friendly strategies. The same goes for efforts to gain legitimacy from the anti-capitalist community. Short of art world or activist recognition, people will seek community elsewhere.

Although we all need to make money to survive, there is no need, Thompson says, to abandon our radical ambitions.[49] It is never altogether clear in *Seeing Power* to what extent cultural capital is ever anything more than a cipher for social relations under capitalism. This is not completely mistaken but Thompson, unlike Bourdieu, does not relate social and cultural capital to the question of struggle between social classes. The notion of paranoia and denunciations of selling out are not outside the range of the ethical disposition, which serves to provide new parameters for class distinction. Whereas Vaneigem anticipated a world of Masters without Slaves, *Seeing Power* comes closer to his assessment of the indistinction between the two that pervades late capitalist social relations. Such is the paradoxical result of the influence of social constructionist discourse theory, the cultural studies version of Gramsci and theoretical immanentism. Power, Thompson argues, is not purely financial but is encoded in differences of race, class, gender and geography, and is thus not something to be challenged but shared. The logic is one of empowerment and its politics is one of cultural relativism. Thompson questions the avant-garde gesture as one that uses what it assumes is another's inertia in order to propel itself forward.[50] His view of the avant garde has none of the complexity of Bürger's assessment of the historical avant gardes or Roberts' core programme of post-art as general social technique. It conforms more, I would argue, to the aestheticist tendencies of (petty-)bourgeois bohemians, which I argue is structural today to the ideology of global cultural production. In its current form as knowledge and creative industries, alternative culture both reflects and requires a non-discursive, non-collaborative and intolerant public against which it promotes reformist, relational, participatory, dialogical, communitarian, identitarian and activist forms, even when it is directed against a more nebulous neoliberal capitalism. The rise of rightist movements around

Le Pen, Trump and Brexit have only further mystified the limits of this politics. But this much is simply "seeing neoliberal governance." The post-political left allodoxically confuses its culture wars and socially ameliorative art with the challenge to biocapitalism. It is worth citing Žižek here at length:

> [A]lthough the "ruling class" disagrees with the populist moral agenda, it tolerates the "moral war" as a means of keeping the lower classes in check, allowing them to articulate their fury without disturbing vested economic interests. What this means is that the *culture war* is a *class war* in displaced mode – pace those who claim that we live in a post-class society […] The first thing to note here is that it takes two to fight a culture war: culture is also the dominant ideological topic of the "enlightened" liberals whose politics is focused on the fight against sexism, racism, and fundamentalism, and for multicultural tolerance. The key question is thus: why has "culture" emerged as our central life-world category? […] The second thing to note is how, while professing their solidarity with the poor, liberals encode their culture war with an opposed class message. More often than not, their fight for multicultural tolerance and women's rights marks the counter-position to the alleged intolerance, fundamentalism, and patriarchal sexism of the "lower classes." […] For example, the feminist struggle can be articulated into a chain with the progressive struggle for emancipation, or it can (as it certainly does) function as an ideological tool with which the upper-middle classes assert their superiority over the "patriarchal and intolerant" lower classes. The point is not only that the feminist struggle can be articulated in different ways with the class antagonism, but that the class antagonism is, as it were, doubly inscribed here: it is the specific constellation of the class struggle itself that explains why the feminist struggle was appropriated by the upper classes. […] The third thing to underline is the fundamental difference between feminist, anti-racist, anti-sexist and other such struggles and the class struggle. In the first case, the goal is to translate antagonism into difference (the peaceful coexistence of sexes, religions, ethnic groups), while the goal of the class struggle is precisely the opposite, to turn class differences into class antagonisms. […] In other words, while it is logical to say that anti-racism wants all races to be allowed to freely assert and to realize their cultural, political, and economic strivings, it is obviously meaningless to say that the aim of the proletarian class struggle is to allow the bourgeoisie to fully assert its identity and realize its goals.[51]

Social practice art represents a stage beyond the postmodern art of the previous generation, conditioned by necessity as a response to the crises of capitalism and the neoliberal precarization of existence.[52] The expediency of social practice in a world of survivalism is both laudable and dubious, marked as it is by a structural allodoxia that is reinforced by the overwhelming amount of art produced for a global market of art fairs and biennales. Although the kinds of practices Thompson describes are not for the most part the kinds of culture war practices that Žižek's description might imply, there is a broad progressive left continuum, or intersectionist radical democracy, that unites today's social practice art and an earlier moment of the postmodern politics of representation.

The radical left and radical democracy cannot always be so neatly separated, even if the tendency of the latter is to ignore its subservience to capitalist ideology. In the context of increasing precarity these tensions become not only more visible but more acute. In Matthew Flisfeder's account of new media and information technologies, the subject experiences its castration in cyberspace as the effect of its own desire rather than as the effect of authority. The virtuality of life in the "outernet" confronts people with the fact that power is not occupied by an agent of authority. Citing Todd McGowan, Flisfeder states that this absence of prohibition universalizes prohibition: "in order to preserve desire from suffocation, the subject clings to power, willing it into existence."[53] The existence of a big Other, Flisfeder argues, can be re-posited through the network, and, in our case, through social practice, which produces both the self as human capital and sociality as object-commodity. For Bourdieu, the rules of art are protected from consciousness by the partial objectification of one's position in the game.[54] *Seeing Power* avoids a serious critique of capitalism. This might seem an unfair assessment given the fact that Thompson mentions the danger of capitalist co-optation at every turn. He broaches the issue when he writes: "This contradiction between [cultural] content and capital is part and parcel of the very fiber of contemporary arts."[55] In this sentence he is very close to identifying capital as form, which subordinates both social and cultural capital and motivates competition where these are unevenly distributed. Had he emphasized this he might have further developed ways to rethink the question of alienation beyond the pragmatic acquisition of skill sets, personal networks and infrastructural power, since these in themselves are not likely to affect global capitalism. As Flisfeder argues about social media, the cultural communication and participatory politics of socially progressive solidarity campaigns are difficult to see as mechanisms of exploitation.[56] The same might be said about social practice art in the context of a neoliberalism in which the more sociable you are, as Vaneigem argued, the more objectified you become.

Against the conditions of precarity, Gielen suggests that artists need to think and organize collectively.[57] Freelance and libertarian autonomy is a negative

freedom that takes away the freedom of others and is justified because it is art. The alternative to this is the shared freedom of self-organized, unionized, collective and heterogeneous networking, which allows for the singular voice of the artist but without taking away the voice of others. The need for such work in common comes from the experience of the failure of community art in the 1990s, in which governments that had destroyed structural social security institutions then invited and funded artists to step into crisis situations and propose temporary, project-based solutions that often made things worse and that offered cheap solutions to the problems created by those same governments in the interests of market objectives. Artists were allowed to work with individuals and collectives on a micro-social level but prevented from acting as a social class on a macro-political level. Gielen's analysis reiterates BAVO's critique of "NGO art" as "embedded cultural activism" that is unable to challenge post-social neoliberal politics and that co-opts oppositional forces.[58] The need for artists to be constructive problem-solvers of the ills created by neoliberal policies conditions a "blackmail of constructive critique," they argue, which is symptomatic of the way that the needs of economic reproduction shifts the discussion from problems to solutions, from radical political critique to pragmatic business-as-usual.[59]

BAVO thus propose to change the rules of the game of "social aesthetics" and defend the right to criticize the ruling order without offering pragmatic alternatives, which only create the illusion that the system is receptive to transparent participatory improvement through the inclusion of grassroots input. The organizational response not only implies a mix of micro and macro-politics in nomadic commons, as Gielen suggests, but raises what BAVO refer to as "the spectre of the avant garde." As the political ambitions of artists under post-Fordist postmodernism have become increasingly modest, devolving from revolution to reform, power allows for forms of critical participation that prevent socially relevant forms of transformation.[60] Neoliberal institutions are otherwise reproduced by artists who affirm the myth of the artist as a "subversive cultural actor" and "subject supposed to subvert."[61] The artist is consequently pragmatic on a socio-economic level even if subversive on an artistic level. Either way, the situation serves neoliberal governance.

In BAVO's work, Vaneigem's revolution of everyday life overlaps with Žižek's Lacanian form of ideology critique. For Vaneigem, survival in cybernetic society implies a "hygiene of survival" in which one should avoid strong emotions, eat less and drink in moderation, all so that one can continue to play one's role in the economy of survival.[62] For Žižek, the notion of revolution is opposed to this, since, as he writes,

> in revolution, there is no *a priori* positive determination […] a revolution is not legitimized by the positive notion of what

> constitutes Man's essence, 'alienated' in present conditions and to be realized through the revolutionary process – the only legitimization of a revolution is negative, a will to break with the past.[63]

In contrast, today's post-political activism offers subversion that is deprived of radical ambition just as products are deprived of their malignant property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol. Despite the desire for change, the contemporary artist is allowed to critique because the conditions of power suspend its efficacy. This is why Bourdieu's notion of petty-bourgeois allodoxia applies equally in a network culture to the reception of avant-garde art as to vanguard politics. The conditions of post-enlightenment schizo-cynicism make the superego enjoyment of social practice art into a public staging of repressed truths that are allowed as a perverse norm. One can see this clearly enough as the Creative Time Summit shifts ever more gradually from revolutionary themes back to NGO community art as the global extension of socially responsible entrepreneurialism.

In keeping with Vaneigem's emphasis on subjectivity, Žižekian ideology critique proposes that one should abstain from the demand to subvert, allowing the subject to confront the emptiness of the rule of neoliberalism and its goal of keeping the subject in a constant state of activism. Vaneigem's "you won't fuck with us much longer" meets Žižek's "I would prefer not to" in the prism of *Don't Network*. In this context, what does it mean to collectivize? First, collectivism begins to be understood as internal to global biocapitalism. One should stage such a new organization in terms of living as capitalist form. Secondly, one should understand this demand for collectivized protest and activism as required by the current conditions, now endorsed by the university and cultural institutions. Thirdly, traverse the fantasy, negate the form of collectivism by creating a "don't network" that underscores how under the hegemony of a post-political petty bourgeoisie, *il n'y a pas de relation idéologique*.

My Party for a Network

The negation of the negation, or "subversion of the subversion," is the method according to which we can assess various recent statements on the new organizational imperative, that is, insofar as we are talking about cultural activism and a vanguard that incorporates art praxis. The possibility of being a party artist today or the kind of avant garde that like the Surrealists could be affiliated with a communist party seems mitigated by the sense that after the fiascos of Stalinism, a broad-based revolutionary movement must remain leaderless, decentralized and nomadic. Such has more or less been the modus operandi of the anti-globalization movement. This situation is nicely summed up by

Lovink, who argues that the purpose of a re-invented contemporary (artistic) avant garde – in a context in which commons are becoming increasingly technological and post-capitalist – is to help design commons as public infrastructure.[64] Lovink, who identifies as an autonomous anarchist, suggests that both the logic of social movement horizontality and that of communist leadership are inadequate. The "total sharing experiences" of communes, with their folk politics, charismatic personalities and tyranny of leaderlessness do not allow for the freedom of open networks. On the other hand, the notion that we could revisit the "idea of communism," as advocated by people like Žižek and Jodi Dean, he says, is a "stillborn meme."[65] The "orgnets" that Lovink and Ned Rossiter have elsewhere discussed are therefore presented as a kind of technological solution to a political and organizational problem. Whereas social movements become non-sustainable because of their dependency on social media, with quick interactions that do not consolidate into long-lasting social action and that through networks are connected to control by the managerial class, orgnets seek to leverage the potential of the Internet in order to build sustainable networks that spread progressive knowledge, replacing swarms, mobs and counterculture with vanguards that do not distinguish between networks and organization.[66] Orgnets are different from the previous waves of dissent in the sense that they "emphasize intensive collaborations within a limited group of engaged users" rather than the "offline romanticism" of carnivalesque crowds.[67] They conjoin software cultures with leadership in Internet culture, as is the case for instance with WikiLeaks or other groups that can scale social problems, shifting the logic from surveillance monitoring to accomplishing tasks. The concern, therefore, is not one of connectivity for the sake of connectivity. Today's activists, according to Lovink, need to face the problem that new media mobilize leaderless masses but also "deconstruct, disassemble, deschool, and fragment" simply because, as he puts it, "the networked computer is a deeply postmodern, immobilizing Cold War machine."[68]

What happens when the "network paradigm" becomes the solution to social, cultural and political problems? One finds a structurally similar though less technologically specific question posed in a 2014 discussion by Michael Hardt on "the leadership problem."[69] Hardt outlines three general positions on the question of leadership on today's left. The first, as could be represented by the writings of David Graber and John Holloway, would argue that the movements are fine as they are, that there is no leadership problem and that the horizontality of the social movements is prefiguring the democracy to come. The third view, as represented by Žižek and Dean, is that all is not fine, that the left is loosing ground and that we need leadership, programme and political party structures.[70] With respect to these two options, Lovink asks: "Will eruptions transform into political parties or will the decentralized anarchist approach prevail? It sounds like post-1848 all over again. Are we waiting for our version

of the Paris Commune?"[71] The distinction is weighted in favour of the new tendencies. But Hardt reminds us that Marx believed that the Paris communards were too quick to dissolve centralized leadership, a stance that was taken up by Lenin in *State and Revolution* and later adapted by Mao to propose the dialectic of masses and party leadership. This could be brought to date with reference to Malcolm Gladwell's *New Yorker* article on "why the revolution will not be tweeted," which compares the weak ties and horizontal decentralization of networked activism to the strong ties of the civil rights movement.[72] The mediating position between these two, as represented according to Hardt by someone like Wolfgang Streeck, is that despite the imminent collapse of capitalism, there is no social subject who can act as a progressive agent of change.[73] The solution to this problem, it seems, can be resolved by designating digital networks as the new agent of historical change. The idea of networks as agents of change and as the new organizational imperative, therefore, inverts the emphasis on sociality and social capital in the writings of Kraus and Thompson.

From the Banal to the Ideal

The most distilled version of networks as the solution to the "two deaths" of horizontality and verticality is proposed by Manuel Castells, one of the leading figures of network theory. In *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Castells reflects on the wave of protests from Tunisia to Egypt, the broader Arab Spring, the *indignados* of Spain and Occupy Wall Street.[74] Castells interprets Internet social networks in idealistic terms as "spaces of autonomy" that are beyond the control of governments and corporations. He emphasizes the logic of socialized, interactive and viral communication through digital networks as means to build forms of counter-power and to overcome fear in conditions of oppression. Communication networks are described as "multimodal," allowing for individual and collective autonomy vis-à-vis the institutions of society since information can be reorganized around competing and collaborating interests that seek to define the rules and norms of society. Castells argues that because it has a monopoly on violence, the state is the default network that controls the main networks of government, security, finance, media and technology. Counter-powers, including media, political groups, business and academia, reprogram networks around alternative social projects. Social movements, in turn, seek to bring about social change and are facilitated by digital and social networks that allow for the dissemination of autonomous communication and the coordination of actions like the occupation of spaces. Cyberspace is thus connected to urban space and in the process of social movement formation, political and ideological agendas may emerge, these being "indispensable materials" in the passage from individual emotions and affective intelligence towards deliberation and project construction.

While Castells emphasizes democratic participation against instrumentalization by ideology, leaders and intellectuals – for instance, the *indignados* did not have a programme – he does not question the instrumentality of network technology. Although he also does not limit social movements to Internet networks and mobile networks, emphasizing the entire range of everyday practices and workplace struggles, the Internet is conceived as indispensable, as can be noticed by the failure of the Egyptian government's attempt to shut down the Internet and to censor social media and mobile phones during the 2011 uprising. Castells concedes that social media do not cause social movements. Instead of causation, however, he makes a far more interesting claim: "Of course technology does not determine social movements or for that matter any social behavior. But Internet and mobile phone networks are not simply tools, but organizational forms, cultural expressions and specific platforms for political autonomy."[75] If we abstract the different kinds of symbolic expression that are possible, and the different political perspectives, we are left with the notion that *digital technologies are in and of themselves organizational forms*. Moreover, political autonomy "can only be insured," Castells says, by organization in the "free space of communication networks" since networked flows are inherently discontinuous: "the space of autonomy is the new spatial form of networked social movements."[76]

Despite his progressive leanings, Castells seems more or less at peace with what Dean refers to as communicative capitalism and what Fuchs outlined as the problems of digital labour. As long as people are fighting dictatorships or gross inequality, a more or less liberal sensibility is enabled by networks as the organizational solution to the concentration of power. However, the network paradigm is not simply politically neutral since its logic emphasizes horizontality as a norm.[77] With its constant interaction between nodes, the network is perceived as the agent of historical progress. On the subject of the *indignados*, Castells writes: "[t]he new subjectivity appeared in the network: the network became the subject."[78] The rejection of realpolitik in favour of rhizomatic "transference" is thus, in Castells' view, "a new kind of revolution" that refuses to be enclosed in an ideological ghetto.[79] Castells' position is utopian at best since the equation of politics with technology ignores existing social conditions. The conclusion to be drawn is that progressive liberal democratic movements can set goals but socialist movements cannot. Socialism is top heavy with "unreconstructed" old left views of the world, but neoliberal biocapitalism is paradoxically both networked and at the same time organized against the system.[80] While Castells "dares," as he puts it, to refer to Occupy Wall Street as "class struggle," he insists that inequality is not a problem of capitalism but a question of economic distribution.[81] Marxists be damned.

Because of his wishfully naive democratic ideology, which ignores even the problems that can be attributed to networks, Castells approaches the question

of mode of production without its ideological remainder. A more politically radical version of what is largely the same position as Castells' is put forward by Rodrigo Nunes in *Organisation of the Organisationless: Collective Action After Networks*.[82] Nunes refers to the same cycle of protests, from the Zapatista uprising of 1994 to the alter-globalization movement and the "qualitative leap" of the web 2.0 struggles of 2011 against global capitalism, remarking on the tendency of a new generation of activists to use the Internet to organize in networks and as an alternative to representative politics. The Internet, which is now part of most people's everyday lives (in the West), facilitates organization, mobilization, communication, spontaneity, affective flows and support structures.[83] Given the fact that formal organizations can now be avoided, the practical problem is how to allow for the greatest amount of democracy while also allowing for concerted strategic action on political decisions.

Alluding to the problem of horizontality versus leadership, Nunes admits that in their aversion to formal structures and bureaucracy, the partisans of networked horizontality, leaderlessness, openness and transparency, tend to ignore the "intrinsic properties" of networks that cannot be simply wished away. Since detractors focus almost exclusively on the party form, the counter-tendency is to emphasize that the network solution to the political dilemma favours autonomist anti-hierarchy, horizontalism and direct democracy, as expressed perfectly by Jeffrey S. Juris in his essay title "Anarchism, or The Cultural Logic of Networking," which argues that despite the fact that the logic of networking is shaped by information capitalism, networked anti-globalization movements tend to "express political strategies that are consistent with anarchist views regarding political parties, the state, self-management, and federation" as well as "an ethic of openness, fluidity, and flexibility" that is "associated with 'networks' as a broader political and cultural ideal."[84] One cannot do without networks. As Nunes puts it: "Regardless of whether or not one is for or against them, whatever solution to organisational and strategic problems can be expected today will in all likelihood come from within networks."[85] Nunes adds the caveat that even a return to the party form, if that option was chosen, would give precedence to networks. In this regard, he says, strategy should avoid network fetishisms like leaderless prefiguration and rhizomatic horizontality and should instead seek balance between openness and closure, dispersion and unity, strategic action and process. Such post-political politics require further mediation.

Nunes takes a small step away from Castells by making a distinction between a network-system and a network-movement. In the case of something like a Twitter-facilitated protest or uprising, the network comprises several networks, down to individual nodes and tweets. Not unlike Badiou's use of set theory to describe ontology, Nunes argues that networks comprise an indefinite number of networks at an indefinite number of scales. Twitter and

social media-enabled revolutions involve more people than those who define themselves as activists. I can vouch for this in relation to the 2012 Maple Spring in Quebec, which involved different levels of student-to-citizen mobilization within a general social movement politics against neoliberalization. A network-system thus involves multiple, interacting networks with their own sets of ties and strengths that are non-reducible to one another. Network systems overlap with other network systems and go beyond self-identification based on political expression.

So far, Nunes' work challenges the notion put forward by W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg that "digitally enabled action networks" allow users and activists to put forward more personalized collective action frames, for instance via Twitter, YouTube and Facebook – a notion of "connective action" and "personalized communication" based on personal hopes, lifestyles values and multiple grievances (like economic justice, environmental protection, human rights and collective bargaining), and which weighs personal participation costs in online-offline coordination against what appears to most as the marginal gains that could come to someone from joining formal political groups and parties. Despite the complex political ecologies that such technologically-enabled connective action produces in relation to what they squeamishly refer to as "contentious politics," Bennett and Segerberg's inclusion of rational choice logic within collective action logic tends to collapse politics with identity, as they argue can be noticed in the "easy to personalize" Occupy Wall Street slogan "We Are the 99%."[86] One advantage that these authors have over Castells is that they do not conflate networks with organizational forms, such as, for instance, Occupy Wall Street. Regardless, all political action in their view is networked, whether these are forms of collective action that depend on organizations to facilitate coordination, that self-organize without organizational actors, or that are organizationally enabled.[87]

Another social movement theorist, Paulo Gerbado, argues that the slogan "We Are the 99%" rather reflects the populism of movements like the Spanish *indignados* and Occupy Wall Street. Despite these movements' common concerns, such as the politics and economics of austerity, Gerbaudo emphasizes the specificity of national and geographical contexts. *Tweets and the Streets*, Gerbaudo's study of activist uses of social media as means to mobilize collective action, begins with the same structure we identified above as the focus on communicative practices, stating at the outset:

> With its hierarchical and centralised structure the Party newspaper appeared a perfect reflection of the Leninist vanguard Party. So what do social media like Twitter and Facebook, with their constitutive evanescence and multiplicity tell us about the movements that have adopted them as key means

> of communication? How do the communicative practices constructed through them reflect the forms of organisation of contemporary social movements?[88]

If networks are perceived to encourage new organizational forms, Gerbaudo cautions against the kind of technological fetishism that pundits have relied on to hail social movement protests as Facebook and Twitter revolutions. Avoiding techno-optimism, which believes that technology changes human behaviour in a uni-directionally positive way, as well as techno-pessimism, which warns against government and corporate control, and which decries the "slacktivism" that produces no substantial political outcomes, Gerbaudo opts for a cultural studies type of sociology and social constructionism that substitutes an essentialism of technology for an enthnographic essentialism of people, focusing on how social media can bring together dispersed and individualized constituencies whose narratives, meanings, identities and emotions are involved in the construction of social movements. These constituencies are facilitated by what he calls "soft leaders" who otherwise do not want to be thought of as leaders.[89] As with Bennett and Segerberg, Gerbaudo avoids technological determinism by shifting to collective action, the sense of togetherness and the collapse of politics with, in this case, common identity.[90] He seeks to counteract the individualizing and deterritorializing aspects of the autonomist notion of the multitude by refering to social movement theorist Charles Tilly's 1978 book, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, to then propose "cat-nets," the combination of collective category identities with the presence of dense social networks based on strong ties.[91] One can see the potential limitation of such cat-nets in the response of the Black Lives Matter Global Network to the election of Donald Trump. A BLM statement released on November 15, 2016, argues that the election result demonstrates that American society is dominated by racial hatred, ignoring the two terms of the Obama presidency, the high Latino support for Trump and a class analysis of poverty and inequality.[92] This is not to say that BLM is not an appropriate formation in response to police violence, nor is it to deny the depravity of the Trump administration. However, Marx's notion of the proletariat designates not an identity but a contradictory position of excess within capitalism that is otherwise required for the system of *capital* to reproduce itself, vampire-like, "by sucking living labour," and that no black political establishment can address outside of a critique of the class system, even if class compositions are mutating along with globalization.[93]

Gerbaudo's culturalist and phenomenological approach emphasizes how social media can be a means and a stage towards mobilizations that occur in public places, where technological abstraction gives way to the embodied display of collective action and togetherness in public space. In protest camps, for instance, communitarianism can be expressed through the

collective defence and occupation of a space, which also includes collective eating, sleeping and cleaning. Although Gerbaudo's approach to the dichotomy between virtual and embodied spaces does not overestimate activist uses of new technologies, or the networked logic of the design and management of activist social spaces, it could have made better use of Lefebvre's "trialectics" of space, for which the physical, mental and social are not apprehended separately.[94] Whereas Gerbaudo wishes to emphasize the "full signifiers" of protest space as a counterpoint to the "empty signifiers" of social movements' new organisational networks, allowing, as he says, "the movements to come together and hold together," Lefebvre's *The Social Production of Space* asks the question: "[w]hat is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?"[95] With regard to network ideology, Lefebvre's approach would rather compel us to examine the way that network ideology becomes an immediately productive force in biocapitalism, including the way that its metalanguage and injunction towards codified conformity threatens to abolish the countervailing forces that come from knowledge, culture, values and the space of everyday life. Lefebvre's emphasis becomes particularly germane to embodied social practices like swarms, smart mobs and other forms of non-verbal coded behaviour, which are increasingly produced by the instrumentalized, schizoid and technocratic "representations of space" that are generated by social networks.[96]

Gerbaudo's desire to overcome the "bias of technology" with regard to new social movements, as seen in his emphasis on protest space, is extended through his emphasis on populist politics, which I argue prevents him from reflecting further on the significance of networks for radical politics. At the start of his book he refers to Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason* as an appropriate basis for understanding the Arab Spring, the *indignados* and OWS, since all of these were popular movements that appealed to "the people."[97] Žižek argues that the problem with populism is that it has no specific politics and that in its struggle for hegemony can even include ideological elements like racism.[98] Laclau, Žižek argues, prefers populism to class struggle because it appears as a more open matrix of contingent struggles without a privileged political agent. Among the difficulties that Žižek identifies is the way that populism displaces antagonism and constructs a "pseudoconcrete" enemy who is "reified into a positive ontological entity" whose annihilation "would restore balance and justice."[99] In this instance the problems of neoliberal austerity would for example be the fault of greedy banksters and corrupt politicians rather than the capitalist system. For Žižek, populism contains a minimum of ideological mystification, something that for our purposes we can identify with the Castells construct of network-as-organization. This technicist political matrix can be given different political inflections, an issue that is glossed

over by Gerbaudo's idea of a "choreography of assembly" – with its emotionally affective and participatory rhetoric, but which can also be harnessed by rightist politics – and better accounted for through the simple choice of struggles with which Gerbaudo identifies, which are not in fact populist but rather, as offshoots of anti-globalization, inherently anti-capitalist. However, the reason why the Democratic Party can both ignore Occupy Wall Street (Obama) and also appeal to it (Sanders) is because like the lumpenproletariat, OWS is a social non-group, however well-educated, that is more radically outside the realm of political power than for example the mass worker uprisings in Egypt, which included vast swathes of the middle class and which could vary from liberals to religious fundamentalists. Žižek's standard reply to what Gerbaudo champions as the emotional choreography of assembly is that this would be the easy part. The difficult part has to do with "what happens the morning after."[100] When the camps have disassembled, when the movements have ended the occupation, what did they accomplish?

Rather than evading the emphasis on social media in today's political organizations by looking into personalization or embodied co-presence in spatial occupations, Nunes' analysis of the imbrication of social movements within a network-system ups the ante on the contradictions of networked politics. According to him, a network-system has a greater mediating impact, it would seem, than politically-defined autonomy. Unexpected events rearrange the nodes and ties of a system into new constellations. The performative dimensions of social media come into play when the affective synchronization of enough people reaches a certain threshold, giving particular clusters organizational consistency. Nunes refers to a network-system that overlaps with a social movement as a network-movement. The network-movement is distinct from the network-system insofar as its constituents have a high degree of self-reflexive understanding, with shared intentions and goals. Everyone who is part of a social movement is therefore part of a network-system. Network-movements include sub-networks. These achieve organizational capacity through *stabilization*, establishing rules, membership processes and feelings of solidarity, *formalization*, through express and self-reinforcing decision-making structures, and *consistency*, which allows a movement to develop and persevere longer than the period of its initial formation.[101] On the downside, an intrinsic property of networks is that they produce statistical disparity between highly connected nodes (which become hubs) and a long tail of nodes with a low degree of links. "So this would be bad news," he writes,

> our networks are not only unequal, they are so by mathematical necessity, and this is directly connected to how they develop. The consequence is inescapable: if by 'horizontality' we mean a situation where each node would have exactly the same degree

> or weight in a network as every other node at any given time, networks *cannot* give us that.[102]

Networks therefore cannot be totally flat, he says, completely transparent or horizontal. The good news, he counters, is that the presence of power law phenomena is a sign that a self-organizing system is in effect. Its long tail makes the network more resistant to damage since the average person does not perform a critical function. Today's networked social movements are thus topologically situated between the decentralized and distributed models of networks. Clusters are subject to continuous internal differentiation, leading to quantitative and qualitative shifts, which counteracts the worry that certain hubs might become essential to the network's existence. Rather than horizontality, what a network-system generates is a distributed network with a high degree of redundancy and ties between nodes that are not crucial hubs.

The consequent form of what Nunes identifies as "distributed leadership" and "diffuse vanguardism" means that the initiative of anyone or any group or idea can occupy the function of leadership and produce unexpected impacts. Nunes gives the example of the decision to set up camps (*acampadas*) in Madrid's Puerta del Sol, which allowed a local network-system to generate a country-wide network-system. While within network-systems, vanguard functions and leadership are a matter of node degree, with certain hubs distributing more traffic and connecting more clusters, making certain "authorities" more influential, distributed leadership can nevertheless come from anywhere and anyone.[103] Nodes and hubs are therefore legitimized according to their perceived "network ethic," which is measured by cooperation in the interest of the network-system, and movements that are suspicious of representational politics tend to be wary of nodes that become too powerful.[104] Nunes asserts that the vanguard function of a node can only be assessed retroactively, an observation that allows us to question his previous notion of the "performativity" of network synchronization. He argues that vanguard functions are objective to the extent that their causal effects can be assessed retroactively, but not objective in the sense of being determined by teleological laws based on class struggle. This reflects the argument I made earlier that the tendency within network theories of political organization is to regard the network itself as the agent of change. Nunes seems to think that networks guarantee horizontality and prevent the transcendence of agent over process. Although his politics may be different from those of Castells, he also obviates the question of ideology and political programme, and understands vanguard politics as a "strategic wager" to support certain initiatives within the flow of networked possibilities. The network thus appears as an ideal system for achieving politics goals.

A few concrete examples give us further insight into the question of networked organization. In his essay on the avant garde, Lovink draws on the

motif of disappearance to suggest that his vanguard orgnets must avoid identifiable leadership structures and develop non-terrorist insurgency models and prototypes of the "open conspiracy." He writes: "Instead of creating yet another image (layer), our avant-garde will fight on the invisible and immaterial frontlines, from the shadows, as invisible networks, without links or likes or recommendations, working on 'data prevention'."[105] One of the test cases for invisible networks is the activity of Anonymous. In her study of Anonymous, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, Gabriella Coleman argues that despite the fact that Anonymous has "no consistent philosophy or political programme," they have been integral to progressive struggles since around 2008, when they shifted from such "Internet motherfuckery" as malevolent trolling and DDoS attacks on the Church of Scientology towards more activist projects like Operation Avenge Assange (after PayPal and Mastercard refused to process donations to WikiLeaks), supporting the various struggles of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, or targeting Fortune 500 companies, including the Koch brothers and military defence contractors.[106]

The main principles of Anonymous, according to Coleman, are its commitment to anonymity and its dedication to the free flow of information, sometimes to the point of rejecting any form of Internet security.[107] In the case of Anonymous, the vanguard functions that Nunes refers to are eclipsed by the question of technological skill, a kind of vigilante justice that is debated within the Anonymous network, and a hacker culture that rewards both deviance and (anti-)celebrity, or what Coleman describes as "pure competition without the interference of reputation or social capital."[108] Some of this mix can be noticed in the last statement made by LulzSec, a group of hackers that broke away from Anonymous:

> For the past 50 days we've been disrupting and exposing corporations, governments, often the general population itself, and quite possibly everything in between, just because we could. All to selflessly entertain others – vanity, fame, recognition, all of these things are shadowed by our desire for that which we all love. The raw, uninterrupted, chaotic thrill of entertainment and anarchy. It's what we all crave, even the seemingly lifeless politicians and emotionless, middle-aged self-titled failures.[109]

Without addressing specific Anonymous campaigns, we can glean from Coleman's study some questions regarding the desirability of a cloaked vanguard organization, as suggested by Lovink. For one thing, Anonymous sometimes operates in the grey zones of legality and often within illegal parameters, such that the U.S. government propagates the fear that Anons are involved in cyberwarfare, sometimes recruiting Anons as informants and otherwise

arresting outlaw participants. According to Coleman, Anons resist institutionalization and remain underground. Although they tend to congregate online, Anons can be known to one another and share an insider culture that allows for collective decision-making and peer exchange. Anonymous is no different in this sense from Castells' and Nunes' activist networks, with different political orientations and moral positions being open to debate, or code, and with clusters forming around different initiatives. For instance, the DDoS of PayPal involved thousands of participants in what Coleman describes as "a mixture of manipulation, false information, good intentions and rampant uncertainty."[110] One weakness it seems is that this mutating formation of groups, because it rejects what Nunes outlined as organizational stablization, formulation and consistency, prefers "limited protocols for adjudication, social reproduction and mentoring," as well as ad hoc, short-term reactions to distinct social events.[111] Despite these limitations, Anonymous' decentred structure of organization and dedication to secrecy prevents it from being demobilized, despite occasional infiltrations and the "doxing" of member information. Its specificity is its ability to engage in both structured (decide together) and structureless (decide separately) nonviolent digital civil disobedience and direct action, often according to a "hive mind mode," which allows Anons to participate from anywhere in the world but otherwise carry on with everyday life. Anonymous Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels can be found around the world, with national and regional nodes that are connected to any number or kind of allied nodes, from NGOs and lawyers, to policy makers and journalists. Although its composition is ethnically heterogeneous, most hackers tend to be white middle-class males with libertarian politics. Coleman argues against criticisms of Anonymous on the basis of identity markers since this detracts from the question of politically conscientious action.[112]

Coleman concludes her study with the view that in a world that is increasingly subject to suspicionless surveillance and an Internet that is increasingly under government and corporate control, the secrecy of Anonymous is, as such, a political act that like Tute Bianche, Pussy Riot and other collective phantoms are free for anyone to embody. Anonymous appears to be less a traditionally conceived vanguard than a nomadic network that calls leadership into question. According to Neil Sutherland, Christopher Land and Steffan Böhm, the notion of leadership within social movement organizations (SMOs) contrasts with mainstream notions of leadership as the product of individuals invested with authority and who possess certain attributes, whether that be credibility, style, charisma or specific skills.[113] A "critical leadership studies" and "critical management studies" approach, more consistent with Nunes' writing on networked organizations, proposes a politically acephalous process that defines leadership as a socially constructed process shaped by interaction and negotiation, that is concerned with the negotiation of power in meaning-making,

and that is based on the multiplicity of leadership actors, who express ideas or actions that are acknowledged by others.[114] The authors note that such an organizational form reflects anarchist principles of horizontal, participatory and prefigurative politics, which distributes skills and roles, and encourages the spread of leadership within the movement, allowing for its continuity.

The case of Anonymous can be productively compared to the rise and decline of Indymedia, which Todd Wolfson describes in his ethnographic analysis of the global justice movement, *Digital Rebellion: The Rise of the Cyber Left*. Like many other authors, Wolfson covers recent social movement actors, from the Zapatistas to the anti-globalization movement and the movement of the squares, all of which he interprets as "facsimilies" of the networked society in which they live.[115] Wolfson's use of the term "cyber left" is somewhat misleading since his book is concerned to show the limitations of the concept. Broadly stated, the term cyber left associates social movement building with the use of new digital communication technologies, from the Internet to cell phones, which leads to new organizational structures and strategies that Wolfson defines as "digital activism." Wolfson takes a dialectical approach to technology, understanding that technologies are produced with the intentions of those who hold power, even if such power is contested and such tools are used for progressive purposes. The logic of resistance of the cyber left as a "globalized, digitized, radically democratic network formation" is its *structure* (a decentralized, transnational network), its mode of *governance* (a local-to-global direct participatory democracy) and its *strategy* (the use of new technologies to connect diverse social movements).[116]

Wolfson concludes the introduction to his book with the observation that the ideal of horizontalist participatory democracy is both what is most exciting about the cyber left and at the same time what is most problematic about it. The rest of his book seeks to understand the struggles of Indymedia and its limits with regard to strategy and organization. Based in grassroots citizen journalism and the unrestricted distribution of information, Indymedia shares in the cultural logic of resistance of the cyber left, a logic based on decentralized networks and the struggle for communications commons as an extension of social justice movements. The emphasis on decentralization means that different independent struggles can be networked by digital platforms into a complex of struggles that resist neoliberaliztion. Its participatory politics means that such networks have no hierarchy, no elections and no executive boards, prefiguring an egalitarian society. Unlike Nunes, who argues that the inherent property of networks is that they can never be totally flat, horizontal and democratic, and who therefore attributes the problem of networks to networks, Wolfson understands the problems of the cyber left as being tied to the logic of global capitalism. Citing Juris, Wolfson argues that the logic of networking is inherent to informational capitalism and that horizontality

corresponds to a democratic logic of resistance that may not be very helpful to those who are most oppressed. Moreover, a deterministic understanding of technology makes movements unable to make proactive decisions and build powerful long-term organizations through leadership and political education.

For Wolfson, the cyber left grounds its analysis in network logic and not in questions of class analysis, political economy and the critique of capitalism. Not surprisingly, the global class of network activists tend to be people with high degrees of economic, cultural and social capital, who can travel and afford to do activist work almost for free, and – in a criticism that disputes Coleman's assessment – also tend to be white, male and middle-class. Wolfson draws on Herbert Marcuse's distinction between those who are oppressed and those who are alienated by capitalism, a difference that brings about different strategies and goals. Cyber left institutions, he argues, are almost exclusively comprised of discontented middle-class activists. This leads Wolfson to suggest a crisis of representativity for networks of resistance that have difficulty connecting their ideology with the masses. If capitalism puts profits ahead of people, the cyber left we could say puts technology first, building web platforms rather than political relationships. Criticizing the determinism that subtends technological solutions, Wolfson writes: "Instead of harnessing technology as a critical element in the material struggles of everyday life, members of the Cyber Left tend to lift technology out of social context, and the technology itself becomes the instrument of change."[117] The cyber left therefore lacks a vision of what it wants to achieve and focuses instead on organizational form as its main concern. Insofar as the logic of networks drives social change, it dismisses in advance the structures of accountability, leadership and decision-making. The result, according to Wolfson, is that weak networks lead to unsustainable social movement institutions that celebrate decentralization, impermanence and autonomy over collective sovereignty.

All of these tendencies lead to what Wolfson defines as "social movement orthodoxy," which often makes a virtue out of necessity. He gives as an example the "dialectical politics" of Zapatismo, which emphasize notions of autonomy, communication and networks in response to situations and events as they happen, and which is based in the struggles of the Mayans against expropriation, in particular, after the introduction of neoliberal policies under NAFTA. In contrast, he says, Indymedia and similar cyber left institutions never had a clear political line and technology surreptitiously became both the solution to social problems and the instrument of change. Indymedia, he argues, was neither horizontal nor hierarchical, neither democratic nor authoritarian. It resulted over time into a heterogeneous network with a mixture of decision-making flows at different scales, which allowed for rapid and flexible growth and diverse organizational initiatives. In the long run, the excitement of Indymedia was its capacity for self-organizing growth, but its downside was

its inability to make collective, long-term decisions.[118] This was partly due to the fact that Indymedia activists had no shared ideology, with political leanings ranging from progressive and liberal, to socialist and anarchist. This led to the phenomenon of a weak network without a shared political programme and no clear pattern of decision-making. Debates within the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* over the conflict between worker spontaneity and organizational structure, to New Left groups like SDS and SNCC, who proposed direct participatory democracy, and the nonviolent direct action of OWS, have been eclipsed to a certain degree, Wolfson argues, by the new technologies.[119] This leads some movement activists to suggest that technology should be understood as a tactic, not unlike the Black Bloc or even Indymedia itself or Anonymous. What nevertheless remains as an issue is the diversity of political ideals, which leaves social movements with only a logic of resistance with regard to capitalist deterritorialization.

Wolfson brings his discussion back to Marx's analysis of the contradiction between the forces of production and the social relations of production, which for Wolfson, citing Laclau and Mouffe, includes all forms of antagonism. Whereas social movements see a connection between technology and political resistance through networked self-organization, others emphasize the link between technology and capitalism, which conditions the new forms of networked activism and enables the extension of communicative capitalism as a feature of neoliberal globalization.[120] While Wolfson opts for a third approach to technology that would see it as being neither inherently revolutionary nor inherently capitalist, there is a slight anomaly in this formula since capitalism has long championed technology as a revolutionary force. Capitalism's transformative potential, as we know, is something that greatly impressed Marx and this aspect of his thought has allowed the post-industrial analysis of people like Castells to be combined with the autonomist Marxism that draws on Marx's "Fragment on Machines."

Soviets Plus UBI

The autonomist tendency that Wolfson alludes to is brought to an extreme in Paul Mason's recent work on post-capitalism. Mason is an advocate of the "networked individual" as a new sociological type, which he otherwise refers to as "graduates with no future" and "the Jacobin with a laptop." Mason's networked individual is motivated by downward mobility to become involved in networked protest and networked revolution. He insists that there is no ideology driving the recent wave of global protests and that Marx and Lenin appear to the new generation as "left fascists" that are to be replaced by Situationist tactics and by alternative networks that erode all power relationships.[121] As information technology reduces the need for labour, the centrality of work

and of labour struggles are replaced by calls for the abolition of work. For Mason, Vaneigem's dream of a world that makes room for both individuality and collectivism is enabled by network technologies. The catch is that we cannot simply resist capitalism but must understand the benefits of the economic and technological conditions of global capitalism, with its financial flows and just-in-time production patterns.

In *Postcapitalism* Mason argues that new technologies are creating the conditions for the disappearance of capitalism: "information technology is leading us towards a post-capitalist economy."[122] Because automation reduces the need for labour power, and because information goods can be reproduced at zero marginal cost, the collaborative peer production of shareable information goods, services and organizations through network technology will free society from the dictates of the free market and the logic of supply and demand.[123] Mason's work can be associated with a post-political technicist stream of thinking with a progressive, social utopian and market socialist tendency that has visionary appeal despite its deterministic aspects. The question is whether the changes that Mason envisions will be progressive, egalitarian and emancipatory. If Castells and Nunes see the network as the new model of organization, Mason sees the "networked individual" as the new social archetype: "By creating millions of networked people, financially exploited but with the whole of human intelligence one thumb-swipe away, info-capitalism has created a new agent of change in history: the educated and connected human being."[124] *Postcapitalism* is thus not presented as a guide to organization, but as a "mapping of the contradictions of capitalism," which, he says, comes down to politics, defined as the struggle between the network (the forces of production) and hierarchy (capitalist social relations).[125] This statement takes it as given therefore that networks create horizontality and participation rather that reinforcing relations of domination. Whereas liberal theorists like Benkler and Castells believe that networks will lead to more sustainable forms of capitalism, Mason disputes the tenets of neoliberal economics, which ignore externalities like pollution and the domination of labour. He emphasizes instead how the promotion of "general social knowledge" as a feature of capitalism's development of the forces of production operates as a contradiction in capitalist development. The class struggle within the social factory is a struggle, Mason says, to be human and for knowledge to be based in freedom rather than in machines.[126] Instead of freeing people from work, post-Fordism has transformed all of social existence into a factory for the generation of surplus, blurring the lines between production and consumption and leading to weird formulations like "corporate responsibility."

As the networked economy corrodes traditional property relations and price mechanisms, machine relations will gradually supplant personal links. While corporations may seek to impose monopolies on information goods or

monetize consumer data, networked individuals are nevertheless collectively producing value across all spheres of everyday life. The monetization and commercialization of such things as domestic work, affective work and sex work are for Mason examples of "an economy in revolt against technological progress."[127] This is happening because goods are becoming more difficult to price and work is becoming more difficult to measure. The current drift towards what Graeber refers to as "bullshit jobs" and the inefficiencies of the financial systems currently in place should lead society to abandon the market system in favour of sustainability.[128] This brings Mason to retain in his analysis the Marxist labour theory of value. Because the labour market is based on coercion, and because people fear unemployment, the shift towards automation implies that less labour will be required and the "Internet of Things" will produce goods that are free and commonly owned.[129] Mason makes the argument that only the labour theory of value allows us to appreciate models with zero-cost cascades from information into general production. New markets and new needs will prevent the economy from disappearing altogether but there is no use for artificially high prices, especially in the area of fossil fuels, which should be phased out completely, and there is no call for the extension of property rights to necessities like medicine, education, culture, information, etc.

The question of organization arises in Mason's work in the matter of who will lead the struggle against the capitalist monetization of this new post-capitalist world of possibilities. If the workplace has become all of life, communism, social democracy and trade unionism undergo a fundamental change. Neverminding the compromise of communist parties and trade unions with capitalist governments, the liberation from work, as a feature of the real subsumption of labour, is making the neoliberal politics of austerity its own gravedigger by making workers pay for a shrinking economy through offshoring, privatization, de-industrialization, anti-union laws, unemployment, wage cuts and declining services. No wonder then that Trump is riding on a campaign of renewed national infrastructure and an end to free trade with Asia. The racist and sexist aspects of his campaign are paradoxical since the counter-narrative to this is to reaffirm identity as a feature of networked lifestyle, which rewards adaptability and short-term commitments.[130] The question then will be the ability of people to respond to discriminatory attacks on the basis of social solidarity rather than fragmentary subcultures. Moreover, the rejection of socialist parties by networked social movements has led to the predominance of the neoliberal centre as the least worst option. This vacuum created on the left gives the impetus for social reform to right-wing parties.

Mason's book is an exercise in optimism of the intellect. With Internet connections now available to 600 million people worldwide, networked individuals comprise a new "networked humanity," many of whom are paradoxically against the cybercapitalist "system." For Mason, the new economy

we wish to bring about should be a matter of cybernetic planning rather than armed uprising.[131] A new economy would retain a spontaneous micro-consumer market and allow people to choose where they wish to work, mixing capitalist with post-capitalist structures; power imbalances rather than markets would be eliminated (except in the field of energy, where markets need to be suppressed); it would reward innovation and creativity with incentives and social recognition; business models would be collaborative rather than competitive, with non-money-based activity defining the mode of production and with the state providing credit where needed; this would require the tax system to be reformed and monopolies to be outlawed; it would make use of computer simulations of economic reality in order to socialize the financial system (nationalizing central banks) and abolish the law of value as a means to prevent boom and bust cycles; it would work to shrink debt; it would oversee a zero carbon energy system and the production of zero marginal cost production of machines, goods and services; it would incentivize the creation of local energy systems and renewables; the bureaucracy would be progressively networked, with individuals and temporary assemblies helping to make decisions; patents and intellectual property rights would be eliminated and creative commons licenses would be promoted instead; the public sphere would imply common use; metadata and information would come under social control; the new economy would promote automation to make basic goods and services free (as opposed to returning to a primitive economy of gift exchange based on tribal and mafia systems of prestige and obligations); rather than raising wages, water, energy, housing, transportation, health care and telecommunications would be provided at cost; the new economy would make work voluntary through the mechanism of an unconditional universal basic income that is guaranteed by the state, that replaces unemployment benefits, and that is funded through taxation and supplemented where needed, thereby subsidizing a shift from wages towards shorter work hours; wages would be socialized or disappear; the new economy would allow for law enforcement and military defence to gradually disappear. In short, Mason's theory of post-capitalism implies the end of neoliberalism as we know it.[132]

Rather than calling for the unleashing of collective phantoms, or perhaps in addition to this, Mason calls for networks to be unleashed from their domination by capitalist social relations. As a BBC Channel 4 economics editor with a high social profile, Mason's book has received a great deal of critical reception, with many people raising the question of politics and wondering how it is that the transition to post-capitalism will be accomplished. Owen Hatherley remarks that Mason's technological optimism bypasses the Keynesianism of Corbyn, Sanders, Podemos and Syriza.[133] Rather than seeing networks as the agent of change, Hatherley notes that for Mason this agent is networked humanity. This then brings us back to the observation that the networked

digitariat is also divided by competing political tendencies. As Hatherlwy sees it, Mason's notion of networked humanity collapses social relations and forces of production. Socialists tend to respond that the new revolution in digital technology is not likely to destroy capitalism, with its investments in social media, big data and the inequalities that are implicit in the sharing economy. Hillary Wainwright, for instance, notes that Mason conflates information with knowledge, connectivity with organization and determinism with struggle.[134]

One of the most extensive critiques of Mason's book comes from Fuchs, who disputes the idea that information technology can teleologically result in the breakdown of capitalism.[135] Fuchs notes that technological innovation has historically been driven by working-class struggle, causing capitalism to look for new areas to colonize and monopolize. Marx's wonder at the revolutionary power of capital, transposed to the present digital age, overestimates the potential of cognitive capitalism to go beyond the law of value and underestimates social antagonism on a global scale. For Marx, as well as for later interpreters of Marx like Roman Rosolsky and Moishe Postone, the breakdown of the law of value cannot occur under capitalist social relations, a contradiction that is exacerbated today by network technologies.[136] Fuchs criticizes Mason for ignoring the most recent discussions of the labour theory of value in the digital economy, which would require that he address such issues as new forms of value creation, new forms of exploitation, the constant updating of technology, the labour time and conditions involved in the ICT industry, online advertising, the international division of digital labour, unpaid labour, as well as outsourcing and cowdsourcing. Moreover, information capitalism is prone to crisis, as seen in the dotcom crash of the late 1990s.

Fuchs's critique of the claims regarding post-capitalism is that the destruction of the law of value can only come about through conscious political struggle for the decommodification of everything and not through a techno-deterministic framework, for which technology does not appear as "relatively autonomous" but as a matter of historical necessity.[137] The same goes for networked humanity, which may or may not organize itself as the agent of progressive change. Conservatives, populists, fascists and capitalists are also connected, he argues, and connectivity by itself is not inherently politically progressive. Citing Marcuse, who argues that "the realization of freedom and reason requires the free rationality of those who achieve it," Fuchs argues that technological determinism and information fetishism ignore countervailing tendencies.[138] This lesson should be known to leftists, he says, insofar as Lenin thought to apply Taylorism – soviets plus electricity – as a means to reduce labour time in the transition to socialism. In another instance, in November 1966, student members of the Chinese Red Guards attempted to force factory workers in Beijing to increase production in order to advance the goals of Mao. Acts of torture and violence were eventually punished by Communist

Party officials who denounced the students as "bourgeois reactionaries." In the midst of the development of a cyber left, for which the logic of networks is a new organizational imperative, more aspects of life have been commodified and class inequalities have risen exponentially.[139]

A revolutionary Marxism for which the humanization of society and technology becomes a conscious endeavour remains a political objective. Social policy initiatives like universal basic income, which are defined in different ways by the left and the right, are likely to become an ideological weapon in leftist efforts to move beyond neoliberalism. Meanwhile, cybernetic capitalism proletarianizes greater numbers of workers worldwide at the same time that it makes this endebted low-wage labour pool redundant, leading to new waves of protest. Nick Dyer-Witheford argues that the cycle of networked struggles from 2010 to 2015 raise the question of whether cybernetic technolgies can be turned against capital. Analysis, he argues, must shift from the celebration of gadgets towards an analysis of class stratification that both connects and separates the intermediate middle and petty-bourgeois classes and the working classes, migrant workers and the unemployed. Drawing on the work of Woland/Blaumachen, he focuses on the "uneven dynamic" in different forms of proletarian action, from the riots of the excluded, to workplace conflicts, mass public occupations, as well as leaks and hacks.[140] Each of these different forms of outbreak involves different class compositions and different kinds of cybernetic appropriation. He summarizes his findings with the following:

> Thus the 'riots of the excluded' proceeded largely outside of any articulated political horizon, flared up and went down – until next time. Wage struggles, where they were not simply defeated, as they usually were, could be contained by wage increases; in China, strike waves subsided as the price of labour rose. Leakers and hackers, however startling their exploits, paid a very heavy price for them. Occupy movements generally failed to extend themselves out of the squares, to the mass of sevice and industrial labour and pauperized communities; they did not go, at best, beyond regime change and usually fell far short.[141]

Proletarian movements, he concludes, have no choice but to make use of networked communication, even if the same technologies are used to instensify capitalist appropriation and even if such technologies might do as much to fragment struggles as to start them.[142] Dyer-Witheford calls for the organization of "syndicates," wich he defines as alliances between workers, the unemployed and precariously employed. Such syndicates would take responsibility for social reproduction across all of society while prioritizing the needy. These new organizations would make use of the different forms of struggle mentioned

previously – riots, occupations, strikes and hacks – but also make sure to build them into cross-segmentary organizations and syndicates that incorporate different struggles into a new organizational synthesis. He wonders: "Would it really be better to be governed by red AIs than neoliberal ones?"[143] Rather than a top-down Leninist vanguard, he argues, the multiplicity of movements should rather organize like networked cells.[144] Understanding the properties and biases of cybernetic systems allows such proletarian movements to build solidarities that systems otherwise tend to negate. One might say something similar with regard to sociality, social capital, civil society, scenes and crowds.

Larry Chait, *We Are the 99 Percent QR Code.* The QR code takes you to the We Are the 99% Tumblr blog. Courtesy of Larry Chait and Occuprint.org.

FIVE

A NETWORKED AVANT GARDE?

There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even tacitly take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.
– Mario Savio, Berkeley Free Speech Movement

The art strikers believe that art is not the residue of some enchanted crusade, but merely another product of human labour, like meals or computer chips. Their flat mercantilism places the refusenik activists oddly in sync with current standards, by which all aesthetic objects are commodities, plain and simple. By their (in)action, the strikers seek to force the recognition of artists as labourers who can, if they choose, shut down the production line that serves the senses.
– Edward Ball, Just Say No

In April of 2016, Gregory Sholette convened an *e-flux conversation* on the subject of Yates McKee's *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*.[1] The contributors to the online forum were asked to address McKee's claim that Occupy Wall Street (OWS) as well as post-Occupy offshoots like Strike Debt, Sandy Relief and Black Lives Matter embody the most

contemporary instance of the avant-garde sublation of art into life. For McKee, the vanguardism of Occupy exceeds the parameters of social practice art and socially engaged art, a shift that he identifies with the moment when participants at the 2011 Creative Time Summit decided to join the people agitating in Zuccotti Park. This moment, he says, "represents the end of socially engaged art" and its dissolution into "an expanded field of 'social engagement'."[2] McKee's statement is a bold repudiation of what Gabriel Rockhill refers to as the "end of illusions" thesis, which assumes that "grandiose historical encounters between art and politics" are a thing of the past, that they are nothing but the "puerile delusions" and "mumbo jumbo of yesteryear's political radicals."[3]

The claims made by McKee as well as the respondents to the e-flux conversation, a grouping of people that one could refer to as a network of activists and scholars dedicated to politicized art practice, bring to the fore the contradictions of vanguardism in the age of networks. McKee's book can be productively compared to the kindred theory of the (post-)avant garde in Stevphen Shukaitis' *The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics and Cultural Labor after the Avant-Garde*.[4] The difference between the two will serve to conceptualize the difference between the art strike, as proposed by Shukaitis, and McKee's striking out of art through its sublation into political organizing. McKee refers to his book as "para-academic militant research" that is addressed to "those working in the art field."[5] Similarly, Shukaitis says that his mapping of the avant garde is neither art history, anthropology nor sociology, but is rather a distinctly autonomist form of strategic relation to knowledge and workers' inquiry that operates on the basis of discontent to intensify antagonisms and formulate new politics.[6] How does the network paradigm shape and inform the new social movements' autonomous self-understanding and self-realization? Does network culture limit or enhance militant organizing and political action? Does it presuppose a new kind of determinism, understood in terms of post-Fordism's real subsumption of labour, or does it embody the possibility of new, unscripted social relations? Alternately, can we still refer to today's radical social practice as avant-garde? What does the idea of the avant garde offer to today's forms of networked art activism and, vice versa, what does the idea of networks offer today's vanguardism?

Strike Art as the Sublation of Art into Biocapitalist Activism

In contrast to postmodern and post-structuralist approaches to cultural politics, McKee's *Strike Art* is informed by the resurgence of macro-political leftism after the rise of the anti-globalization movement that emerged with the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle and after the "movement of the squares" that erupted in 2011 in Greece, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, Wisconsin, and later in Quebec and Turkey. The book is concerned with the relationship of art

to radical politics, including the theory of the avant garde. Moreover, it is concerned with the question of art as a tool for radical political organization. Against aestheticism, however, and in keeping with Bürger's thesis that the historical avant gardes negated the social function of bourgeois art by sublating art into life, the book borrows the name of the Strike Debt student movement to propose that we strike art (~~art~~) in order to engage in "creative direct action."[7] The aesthetics that concern him are those that are developed by artists working within leftist art collectives and social movements. He gives as an example the migration of the slogan "99%" and "1%" from the Occupy Wall Street movement to that of a smaller grouping, the Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction, which since 2014 has been working to expose the labour conditions in Abu Dhabi, where museum branches of the Guggenheim and the Louvre are being built by migrant workers, many of whom are trapped in conditions of indentured servitude. The work of G.U.L.F. is presented as an example of the "renaissance of the avant-garde" since Occupy Wall Street.[8] The politics and aesthetics of this broad-based and decentralized movement of "post-Occupy" practices involves a diversity of styles and tactics, and, unlike the work of most museum artists, is not concerned with incorporation into the canon of art history or into the institutions of the art system. McKee's definition of post-Occupy strike art is premised on anonymity and collective authorship as well as the sublation of art – as he puts it, the "simultaneous negation and affirmation of art itself" within "an expanded field of movement-based cultural production."[9] Art is reinvented as the collective actions of people embedded in radical social movements.

The immediate reference for these kinds of practices is Occupy Wall Street, understood as the "movement imaginary" of a transnational network of activists with anarchist tendencies, dedicated to building commons and collective identities against capitalism. Many of these activists happen to be artists who work at the centre of movements as organizers rather than as "merely cultural" decorators. McKee mentions how the neoliberal mantra of creativity would recognize even Subway employees as "sandwich artists" and contrasts this to the way that activists reject the sublation of art into capitalist valorization. Such kinds of art seek to bypass the art system and its means of valorization, celebrity culture and rapid turnover in styles and themes. Of course both modernism and postmodernism have produced numerous instances and understandings of the "end of art." Strike art proposes the end of art as a leftist response to the sublation of art into the economic circuits of the capitalist culture industries.[10] Alluding to network theory, McKee says that the purpose of strike art is to "redirect nodes within the core of the art system into emerging political formations that would be autonomous from them."[11] Rather than striving for a post in academia or inclusion in a museum collection, engaged artists create autonomous spaces of education in resistance, a "new anarchism"

that deflects the liberal idea of dialogue and proposes instead "self-consciously left-wing cultural work."[12]

Strike art does not have a singular means of determining what is successful aesthetic direct action and what is a failure, especially since it resists the logic of representation and capture. It is concerned with organizing experiments within an assembly-based and participatory movement "network" that is not unconflicted or free of antagonisms. It is not correct to refer to this activity as reactive protest since it seeks to build commons as means of collective survival. The tactic of occupation is just such a construction of social space free from the predatory logic of the market. Occupy, however, as noticed in its various post-Occupy iterations like Occupy Theory, Occupy Faith, Occupy Museums, Sandy Relief, Strike Debt and Black Lives Matter, has no definite pre-determined organizational structure or site. Its only specific ideological programme is its anti-capitalist and anarchist organizational principles based on mutual aid and emphasis on direct action rather than civil disobedience.[13] In relation to the "institution art," as Bürger defined it, strike art seeks to leverage the art system in a "dialectic of art and non-art."[14] While there is always the danger that an art that is separated from life praxis will dissolve into culture industry, the benefits of anti-capitalist autonomy can also be dissolved into capitalist frameworks when art is limited to socially efficacious activism. McKee's solution to this dilemma is to say that strike art follows the most progressive tendencies in social practice and socially engaged art but is informed by the avant-garde dream of overcoming the limitations of the bourgeois ideology of autonomy. In this regard strike artists understand their work in terms of a history of progressive movements, from the socialism of William Morris and the Paris Commune, to Dada, Constructivism, Surrealism, and postwar movements like the Situationists, happenings, conceptualism, minimalism, Black Mask, the Motherfuckers, the Yippies, the Black Panthers, the Art Workers' Coalition and various movements of the New Left. All of these groups understood their work in relation to social movements even if they were also effective within the art system. Strike art does not, however, seek permission from the art system for what counts as meaningful activity. In this sense it is, I would argue, programmatically *alter-networked*. The emphasis on autonomy means that strike art is both able to link to networks but also to uncouple from them and reject its flows and demands. However, as Gavin Grindon and Catherine Flood's exhibition of *Disobedient Objects* at the state institution of the Victoria and Albert Museum indicates, the art media of social movements has an odd presence in a world of real subsumption, where not networking, although it seeks to withdraw from capitalism, works to engage society and affect social change. McKee is certainly aware of this as he mentions the limitation of Occupy in its possibility of embodying the near-universalizing figure of the 99%. The rejection of a political programme that would be grounded in

the analysis of capitalism as a class system leads to the postulate of an abstract universal that vacillates on the one hand between an idealism of the social and on the other on a skepticism vis-à-vis the institutions that define contemporary society.

The Art Strike and Why Marxism Must Be Defended

McKee's text on the strike art of Occupy Wall Street finds a comparable articulation in Shukaitis' work on autonomist politics and the art strike. Shukaitis' book is also concerned to examine art through the prism of the avant garde, understood in terms of the new forms of radical "anti-political" post-politics. In contrast to the emphasis that some activist artists have placed on tactical media, Shukaitis presents his book as an attempt to think in terms of strategy, in particular in the wake of the anti-globalization movement and the Occupy movement. Here too the diversity of tactics merges with the political and technical processes that link different radical struggles. For Shukaitis, the focus on anti-capitalist strategy directly confronts the idea of networks after the rise of social media. He writes:

> But simply advocating a position of endless connection, politics as a vast and seemingly infinite series of networked connections, is not the formation of strategic orientation. Strategy is not the unfolding of endless options but the consideration of contradictory and mutually exclusive necessities."[15]

Shukaitis is concerned therefore to distinguish his notion of strategy from both communicative capitalism and from top-down, institutionalized and centralized party politics.

In contrast to *Strike Art*, *The Composition of Movements to Come* is a book dedicated to transforming the pre-conceived association of the avant garde with macro-political and universalizing vanguardism. He accordingly defines avant-garde art practice as a form of political strategizing that is distinct from the seriousness of political parties and labour unions, a knowledge that is specific to the practices of the artistic avant gardes rather than revolutionary vanguards. This is different from McKee's dialectic of art and non-art since Shukaitis approaches art as a tactic rather than an ideological and philosophical superstructure. Neither aesthetics nor politics have a privileged ontology. Both the aesthetic and the political are thus approached as "compositional practices" that are similar, Shukaitis says, to Jacques Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible. Shukaitis therefore makes a weaker claim to the avant garde than does McKee, arguing that the current reappearance of the avant garde as part of a myth of authenticity is no more distressing than its

disappearance: "The real question isn't whether it's something old, something new, something borrowed, or something blue, but rather what can be done with any currency that remains."[16]

What *The Composition of Movements to Come* proposes is a "strategic reading" of the avant garde. Shukaitis begins his study with the autonomist notion of general intellect, the "underlying networks of knowledge and conversation" that create concepts with which to think about autonomy.[17] Whereas Marxism, he says, subsumes struggle within class analysis, autonomist knowledge extends to such movements as feminist struggles, black politics and indigenous self-determination, invisible forms of production like domestic and migrant labour, and the politics of education, health care, the environment and housing. All of these allow for and do not preclude the emergence of new social subjects. A strategic reading of social compositions identifies the different forces that are at play within class struggle and the actual agents whose practices are represented by the autonomist slogan, derived from Mario Tronti's 1964 essay, "The Strategy of Refusal," which stipulates that resistance is primary. Shukaitis' method seems more tactical than strategic, since it avoids what he describes as a "transcendent" position.[18] What he proposes for praxis is a triangulation of aesthetics, politics and labour. One finds in this nothing any more unusual than a relating of two ideological superstructures to that of the economic base, defined as the social relations and mode of production and the general level of development. Time and again, however, Shukaitis is determined to avoid the base and superstructure model. He cites Alberto Toscano's research and argues that his purpose is to transform the base and superstructure model in such a way that art and labour form an "expressive ontology of labour" where both art and politics have labour as their common source.[19] Whereas such immanentism can more easily associate strategy with changes within the actually existing relations of production, it has more difficulty imagining an alternative to capitalism. The theory of value, for example, is annexed to the libidinal economy of networked flows and intensities, transmitting "affective contagion" rather than imposing leadership, principles and programmes.[20]

The logic of immanentism brings Shukaitis to consider the nature of the avant garde today, detached from the leadership of a party vanguard or from the struggles of the working class – in other words, separated from its "historical-political baggage" in a world in which there do not seem to be any "good options."[21] "Avant-garde practices have no front line today," he writes, "precisely because the entirety of the social has been subsumed by strategic vectors of exploitation by capital."[22] To say that labour is subsumed by capital is not the same as to say that all of society is subsumed. Even if we were to accept this postulate, we would still have to address the incompleteness of the social and of reality, which is the main reason why one can argue that avant-garde practice is in fact possible. Theory, however, is not concerned to bring about

change by engineering everyday life, or what Shukaitis calls the "constructivist nihilism" and set of techniques that artists use to manipulate tastes, immaterial goods and symbolic forms.[23] The issue, then, regarding the sublation of art into life is for Shukaitis the creation of new social compositions and new subjectivities. Such art does not have a specific politics and is fleeting at best, he argues, since repetition of the same gestures leads to their demise. The politics of an art practice are not known in advance but help to restore a sense of self. Does such constant recomposition and mutation lead to anything other than despair, however, to perversity and delusion? It is anyone's guess, as can be surmized by the cover of Shukaitis' book, a Rorschach map of the world by the artist Bertrand Binois.

The only caveat that Shukaitis makes for avant-garde experimentation is that it should facilitate the development of social movements. In this he comes very close to McKee's activist milieu, but with an added emphasis on art as an "expressive ontology of labour."[24] Activist, interventionist and socially engaged art tend to emphasize collective practice oriented towards radical politics. The context in which this takes place, however, is a post-Fordism in which autonomy is part of the logic of flexible organization. This brings the question of aesthetic autonomy together with the politics of labour autonomy, the main issue for Shukaitis as a specialist in organization theory. He follows Gavin Grindon's suggestion that the radical avant garde should be situated within the history of labour studies.[25] This is not a new idea in the sense that Marx and Engels long ago argued that the creative labour of the artist is no different from other kinds of work and that all non-alienated labour is creative, thereby also recognizing that under capitalism art becomes alienated labour and becomes reified through commodification.[26] The difference, if there is one, is that autonomist "class composition" is preferred to the standard Marxist proletariat. The new forms of immaterial labour – the new modes and relations of production, along with their networked digital communications technologies – ostensibly represent a significant theoretical departure. Instead of the syndicalism of blue-collar labour unions, the autonomist line emphasizes refusal and escape from labour. In this sense autonomism responds strategically to the demands for creativity and knowledge production in the new economy. Following the historical avant gardes through to the Situationists, the self-abolition of alienated labour shifts from negation and dialectical overcoming in the creation of life as a work to that of an immanentist connectivity between art, labour and politics that is not guaranteed by labour as such but by social composition. This revolutionizes the new forms of labour refusal into the "advanced guard" of new social and labour practices, liberated from the demands of capitalist accumulation.[27] Art facilitates social movements, but it is not to be directed by a revolutionary political programme that is certain of its strategy since this would subordinate art to politics. Art must triangulate with politics in order to

serve labour and to serve as labour in a process of social interaction.

Inspired by the Situationists, Shukaitis proposes that the avant garde should not lead the proletariat on a predetermined path, but should initiate occupations, situations and assemblies that would build self-determination according to new ideas and strategies. For example, the Situationist theses on the society of the spectacle led to new practices such as the dérive, psychogeography, détournement and the game of war. For Shukaitis, any such strategies would not be inherently radical and so would require constant reformulation.[28] As the Colectivo Situaciones has it, subjects emerge in the process of struggle and gain in their capacity to intervene and alter the terrain of conflict. This is what Shukaitis calls "autodestructive organization" and self-abolishing subjectivity.[29] What kinds of theoretical-philosophical constructs, then, would be appropriate for the network society insofar as networks are part of capitalist productivity and control?

The strategy of resistance must be conscious of the terrain of struggle. Shukaitis gives as an example the art strike. Within the social factory, the digital networks of communication that are commandeered by capitalism steal from workers their imagination and creativity, making more difficult the possibility of political organizing by restructuring the modes and relations of production. The energies of a mythical "creative class" is recuperated for gentrification and capitalization, producing social inequality. The technologies of capture of a post-industrial service economy find people working endlessly in search of fulfillment and avoiding routine work. Labour discipline becomes self-imposed, Shukaitis says, relying on networks of social relations, cooperation and constant communication.[30] The art strike is one way to interrupt these circuits of accumulation within the creative city. Reiterating the autonomous theme of exodus from the factories, Shukaitis proposes that we attempt to exit the social factory, changing Lenin's "what is to be done" into "what is to be undone" and proposing methods to sabotage the process of accumulation. The first line of conflict is the status everyone has today as a creative agent and the potential of creative work. This conflict presupposes the "monstrous" sublation of art into the "zombified" forms of neoliberal cultural production and its participation-based economy of social networks. As he puts it;

> The avant-garde has not died. The creativity contained within the future-oriented potential of the becoming-artistic has lapsed precisely because it has been realized perversely in existing forms of diffuse cultural production. 'Everyone is an artist' as a utopian possibility is realized just as 'everyone is a worker.' […] This condition has reached a new degree of concentration and intensity within the basins of cultural production: the post-Fordist participation-based economy where the multitude

> are sent to work in the metropolitan factory, recombining ideas and images through social networks and technologically mediated forms of communication.[31]

In response to this Shukaitis proposes three stages to the notion of the strike as a strategic response to the demand for free creativity and free labour, and as an appropriate form of antagonism within the social factory. The purpose of the art strike is the reduction and elimination of the influence of work over social life.[32] Such refusal should be a compositional rather than individual gesture. If one was to paraphrase Shukaitis' list of questions regarding work refusal into that of *Don't Network*, we could ask: how is not networking socially embedded? What effects does it produce? What are its actions and practices? What social energies does it engage? What are its affective dynamics? How does negativity enable collectivism and social reproduction?[33] Refusing work can also lead to embracing work for other than the usual purposes, for fun, as an art practice, or as a hobby. This is perhaps less convincing in terms of networking, where all of these kinds of agency are already more than typical as value-added activities. The counter-trend might be more promising, leading from individualized critique to organizational political challenge. Shukaitis therefore proposes renewing the art strike.

The first stage of strike that he describes is the art strike developed by the Art Workers' Coalition in 1969 against the war-related interests of museum board members. Although this approach has devolved into institutional critique one still finds echoes of the AWC in the activities of groups like the Precarious Workers Brigade (Carrot Workers Collective), W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy), BFAMFAPhD and G.U.L.F. (Gulf Labor). The second step is the one proposed by Stuart Home, who called on artists to cease working from 1990 to 1993, extending the focus from the art system to the broader terrain of cultural production. The third stage is that proposed in 2009 by the Temporary Art Strike Committee in response to the city of Vilnius, Lithuania, which sought to rebrand the city and transform it into a European Capital of Culture, linking creativity to a purely market-oriented notion of identity and heritage. In the process of thinking about the way one is subsumed within the social factory, creativity withdraws and expands the terrain of struggle by détourning the network economy. Against the capitalist-friendly "service economy aesthetics" of the relational art scene, the art strike takes up the Situationist refusal of work and reinfuses it into art work.[34]

Hardly a nostalgia for the days before the network society, Shukaitis' fully contradictory approach underscores the Marxist insight that there are no natural social relations among people independent of commodity relations and capitalist exchange.[35] The issue, again, is how the forms of valuation that one finds in artistic practice can contribute to new class compositions. The Marxist

retort is that questions of art value may not be fully reducible to sociology. Whether one thinks of composition in terms of the working class or in other terms, there is still a question of art ontology that comes into play, including questions of judgement and the critique of instrumentality – the famous Marxist critique of the kind of tendency literature that expresses the correct ideological orientation but lacks any distinctly aesthetic value or interest.

This question of art value leads Shukaitis to address the subject of value formation as well as the notion that labour value is greater than the surplus value that is produced through commodification. He links Bürger's formula of art into life with the autonomous Marxist line that resistance is primary. To wit: the resistance of the working class (and of artists to the art system) shapes the means by which capital tries to harness skills, knowledge and creativity into new technical compositions, which potentially leads to new forms of antagonism and collectivity. While new aesthetic and political practices do not simply reflect the conditions of networked sociality and networked production, they do operate in a field where labour and society have been radically restructured, where information is value and where creativity is work. We are here treading some very deterministic ground, even with regard to the distinction between productive and non-productive labour. However, as matters of political economy become more determining, Shukaitis does not develop a distinctly Marxist account of value production. He gives the example of a painting that has taken a certain number of hours to make but that, through the prestige of the artist, has sold for an unprecedented amount of money – say, for example, the record sale at Christie's auction house in 2017 of Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* for $450 million (either by Saudi Prince Bader bin Abdhullah al-Saud, or by the Prince on behalf of the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism for the Louvre Abu Dhabi). For Shukaitis, the value of the object cannot be accounted for by the labour theory of value – the time it took to make it – let alone the Marxist version of this – socially necessary labour time – but to the social sense of value, which links with anthropological definitions of valuation, defined as the value of circulation.[36] What he means by this, however, is not circulation in the sense of money circulation and exchange, but rather, social perception of worth, which is needed to secure the autonomist theory that social value comes first. The social and symbolic value of the painting comes first, one might say, and then capitalism attempts to capture this value through exorbitant prices.

Art, however, is most often not an industrial product in the conventional sense and confronts economics with its particular standards of analysis. Rather than looking to the labour theory of value to resolve this enigma, we could look instead to the sociology of culture and to Bourdieu's field theory of art as an instance of "the economic world turned upside down."[37] While Bourdieu developed a theory of cultural capital that corresponds to economic value and

the field of power, this would not serve Shukaitis' effort to de-ideologize and de-ontologize the realm of aesthetic autonomy. From a Marxist perspective, however, and as Marx put it, "the dice are loaded." For Marx, the worker is always paid less than the value produced by his or her objectified labour. The laws of supply and demand are therefore created against the the background of capitalist exploitation and the devaluation of labour. Wealth is alien wealth and we should find no reason to not see this at play in the prices of the art market, which are part of a global process of financialization that supports economies but also guarantees relations of exploitation, surplus labour, unemployment and underemployment.[38] No amount of social and symbolic meaning changes the means of valorization of labour and so artists would need to insist that art market spending be redirected to fund living artists or be invested in other ways. According to economist Jim Stanford, the value of a good is typically, and on average, equal to the cost of its production. However, the value of non-reproducible items like works of art often deviates from the cost of production. Demand for such items will affect their price value, which has no bearing on the question of the moral legitimacy of profiteering. Marx's critique of the invisible hand of the market understood that prices would accord not only with labour input but with the profit motive.[39]

In the case of Bourdieu, we are not dealing with society and collectivity as an anthropological catch-all, but rather as a set of class differences and class factions. Social agents seek experiences that correspond to their realms of practice and social disposition, or *habitus*, which corresponds with the state of supply, both past and present, and objectified possibilities, distributed according to both cultural and economic capital, over which different class factions will compete and according to which different classifications and rankings will be observed and defined. The acquisition of certain products like artworks will thereby be converted into signs of distinction. One should add that participation in networked collectivism, as opposed for example to the production and sale of paintings, would also today accrue certain marks of distinction and be active in new cultural and political markets whose logic reinforces the supply of cultural, experience and knowledge services, affecting consumer tastes and needs just as surely as a sports match or an election campaign. Such products as are developed in competitive struggle are the source of changes in cultural production and lifestyles, meeting the demand that is shaped by objectively and subjectively antagonistic relations. However, the laws of supply and demand are somewhat skewed in the case of cultural production. As Bourdieu puts it:

> In the case of the production of cultural goods, the relation between supply and demand takes a particular form: the supply always exerts an effect of symbolic imposition. A cultural product – an avant-garde picture, a political manifesto, a newspaper

> – is a constituted taste, a taste which has been raised from the vague semi-existence of half-formulated or unformulated experience, implicit or even unconscious desire, to the full reality of the finished product, by a process of objectification which, in present circumstances, is almost always the work of professionals. It is consequently charged with the legitimizing, reinforcing capacity which objectification always possesses, especially when, as is the case now, the logic of structural homologies [between production and consumption] assigns it to a prestigious group so that it functions as an authority which authorizes and reinforces dispositions by giving them a collectively recognized expression.[40]

The canonical status of Leonardo's painting does not require adjustment to the tastes or cultural and educational capital of the dominant class, who may not even like the work. What the buyer of a half-billion dollar painting likes most, one would assume, is, in the shift from quality into quantity, the expression of objectified capital, which has here achieved the quasi-miraculous correspondence between production (the work of art) and consumption (its exorbitant price), both of which are led by the objective struggle between classes and the possession of capital.[41]

According to Bourdieu, one of the characteristics of counterculture, as opposed to the avant garde, is that it avoids objectifying the game of culture.[42] The more general trend within neoliberal creative industries, urban management and cultural policy is to dissolve avant-gardism into value production around lifestyles, leisure, urban spectacle and gentrification through cultural assets. Sociality itself gets modeled into new kinds of exchange relations. On this subject, Shukaitis cites Marina Vishmidt, who laments the indistinguishability between labour and capital under present circumstances.[43] Critique of the social factory through more creative and knowledge production has no discernible social or political effect. What remains is an awareness of alienation and possibly consciousness of the shifting grounds of antagonism, leading to new organizational capacities and skills, including the social wealth of the new digital commons.

Shukaitis suggests that the political potential of new compositions appears to be minimal.[44] Whatever hope there is would come from the minor politics and subversions of social movements against the dominant social norms of nationalism, religious fundamentalism or identity politics, adopting and subverting their codes of manipulation. He gives as examples the cultural activism of the collectives Neue Slowenische Kunst and the Yes Men, who exaggerate corporate and state agendas in order to undermine their symbolic efficiency, and who use over-identification practices to challenge the conformism that

comes from cynical distance. The negative criticality of such practices does not attempt to fill the symbolic order with a new positive content but emphasizes the contradictions that are in play.[45] Shukaitis concludes his book with a definition of the avant garde that outlines its social function: the attempt to "break through forms of traditions, patterns of governance and convention, and to declare in a new aesthetic form that which can be elaborated into new forms of sociality, cooperation, autonomy and freedom."[46]

The accelerating process of cooptation of radical cultural expression is the danger posed by the network society. Minor politics, for Shukaitis, require a tactical and transgressive rather than strategic approach to communication, whether one engages in reality engineering, libidinal bonding or infopolitical subterfuge. To paraphrase his argument, those who wish to refuse entrepreneurial networking must also anticipate such contextual and ever-changing strategic operations as shielding, obfuscation, layering, encoding and deception. By not giving away too much, minor practices may also avoid the ambition of a political vanguard, which is to launch a process of universal emancipation from neoliberal capitalism. Given its radical commitments, Shukaitis' stratagem is its pretence to have decamped from dialectics while at the same time repurposing Marxist concepts for autonomist uses. Its contribution to the avant garde and the art strike is a theory of praxis that does not link networks to historical necessity but to always shifting social compositions.

System Solidarity

How can we escape biocapitalism without being produced and recuperated by the forces we resist? While Shukaitis' art strike defines art as a strategy in the struggle against neoliberal capital, the purpose of strike art is to liberate art from its current constraints, just as, for instance, the purpose of new social compositions is to liberate labour from the current conditions of low wages, overwork, underemployment and precarity. Although there is a long line of cultural precedents to McKee's notion of strike art, a watershed would be art made in the context of the alter-globalization movement, with its critical pedagogy, direct action and poetic mediation, as seen for instance in the 1999 Battle of Seattle and before then in the Zapatista uprising of 1994 against neoliberal policy, referred to by the Zapatista as the "fourth world war." Such post-vanguardist formations emphasize democratic assemblies over party structures, a practice that extends to social movements and anarchist subcultures. The politics of Occupy, according to McKee, are shaped by the do-it-yourself tactical media and movement-based "indy" media that allow various affinity groups to coordinate the "spectacular appearance" of immanent participation.[47] Movement culture includes such groups as Justseeds, *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, 16 Beaver, The Invisible Committee, Reverend Billy, Yes Men, Natural History

Museum and Creative Time. The participatory frameworks of such groups are not oriented towards convivial sociality but towards building political autonomy and social solidarity in a context of social crisis.

Movement culture today understands itself in terms of a diffuse, horizontal social movement network. In this regard it can be distinguished from the "alternative professionalism" described by Cottington, which would reduce it to the creative industry mandate of wealth production and circulation of information. It can also be distinguished from a relational sociality where what is significant is the level of affect or the "coming together of bodies," as Judith Butler described Occupy Wall Street.[48] Both alternative professionalism and body-centrism are features of the democratic materialism that OWS was challenging. But OWS also challenged the network ideology on which it was dependent, in particular, through artist organizing, the occupation and the encampment.[49] If networks are about flows, then organizing occupation seems to be about slowing down those flows. In the case of OWS this meant perturbing the flow of economic transactions that take place on Wall Street, or, on a more immediate level, the traffic flows in that part of the city and the flows of tourism around the site of the former World Trade Centre. McKee asserts that occupiers appropriated time, space and resources. They held a particular space, where a certain communization was allowed to unfold among the participants, and allowed for struggles to deepen in places other than the immediate site, such as the occupations at the New School in 2008-2009.[50]

The site of an encampment produces an autonomous space with its own infrastructure, borders to be defended, sociality and performativity, as communicational and representational vehicles. It would be difficult to deny that OWS was thoroughly networked in this regard, either internally in terms of communications media access, or externally in terms of support from the outside and through media attention. Indeed, cell phones, computers and video cameras were omnipresent, with even direct interaction being referred to in technological terms: the people's mic. All of this was dedicated to getting out the message and "going viral" through whatever existing digital and broadcast communications channels were already in place. One could say that its purpose was to create a node that would compete with a different node, represented by Wall Street, New York City Hall and the statue of the Charging Bull. As McKee puts it,

> Wall Street thus does not simply name a place, but is rather an overdetermined node standing metonymically for the totality of a vast planetary assemblage of finance capital traversing nation-states and enveloping the entirety of the planet in its pulverizing cycles, at once overwhelming in its technical complexity and self-evident in the brutality of its expulsions and evictions.[51]

Indeed, the "movement of the movements," the "movement of the squares" and various Occupy camps reflect the fantasy amongst activists that "we are everywhere," spreading tentacles and creating new nodes, or counter-nodes, in new locations.

The integrity of the OWS alter-network was also in question as certain left organizations and speakers were viewed with mistrust, including the call by *Adbusters* to put forward one specific demand. A certain paranoia regarding the founding assembly that was first announced at 16 Beaver – defined by McKee as a "para-artistic space" – led to a view of the initial assembly, 10-12 people sitting in a circle behind the bull, as an "embodied collage" and an "alien political form."[52] The initial node in this OWS network is therefore understood by even its closest adherents as a "para-node," which through its horizontality and anti-representational impulse, refuses wholeness. This avant-garde formation affirmed consensus, McKee says, as much as dissensus, consolidation as much as division. The "polyphonic diversity" of Occupy made it, despite its image of direct democracy, "notoriously dysfunctional."[53] Occupy was an act of cutting and separation, he argues, and not a spectacle of democratic inclusion.[54] The bodies that were assembled against the abstract order of international banking and finance were therefore themselves abstract, taking on the trappings of the number systems, statistics and calculation machines of capitalism: We Are the 99%. The public space that was occupied was also fully abstracted, as it is owned by Brookfield Properties. Against the conservative kitsch of the bronze bull, the activists at Zuccotti Park could boast of Mark di Suvero's red biomorphic *Joie de Vivre*. As McKee notes, the various ways of describing the encampment were informed by the history of avant-garde art: a happening mutating over time, a performance work, a surreal space – all of which he argues cannot be reduced to a single concept. One could add that such an avant-garde praxis could not be reduced to the concept of a network. The Occupy camp attempted to reroute the existing frameworks of everyday life around Wall Street by first camping overnight and then remaining on site from September 17 until November 15, when it was eventually evicted.

The connections that OWS wished to make were not simply between individuals with common interests, but between the conditions of precarity and the whole of capitalist social reproduction. This in some ways mitigates Gerbaudo's concern that OWS, because it relied on a core group of organizers to manage Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as steering the General Assemblies, did not entirely live up to its anarchist claims of absolute leaderlessness. This he says became visible after the eviction from Zuccotti Park, when the movement was deprived of its key "nodal point" and then shifted to a mediated online presence.[55] For McKee, if the Occupiers were connected, it was not only through social media, however, but through their grievances.[56] No wonder then that OWS not only spread to hundreds of other cities, but to all

manner of activities under the Occupy "brand": Occupy University, Occupy Faith, Occupy Student Debt, Occupy Think Tank, Occupy Theory, Occupy Homes, Strike Debt, Rolling Jubilee, Free Cooper Union, Healthcare for the 99%, freely distributed publications like the *Occupied Wall Street Journal*, the *Occupy Gazette* and *Tidal: Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy*, and artistic projects like Occupy Arts, Occupy Opera, Occupy Museums, MTL, Fucked Up Ninjas, The Illuminator and Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F. and Gulf Labor Coalition). What unites all of these groups with what Shukaitis discusses in terms of new class compositions is the emphasis on labour and organizational thinking. The artist in these cases is conceived not only as a worker, but as a precarious worker who uses organizational platforms to bring attention to the conditions of inequality, understanding art in the context of political economy. Whereas post-Fordist neoliberalism wishes that artists think of their lives in terms of entrepreneurialism, and in this sense, asks them to accept exorbitant student debt as an investment in their futures, the result is an indebted and low-paid workforce, most of whom will be excluded from meaningful and gainful participation in the fields in which they were trained and who by force will be much more compliant in the face of labour market demands.

The art strike and strike art reject the rhetoric of the creative economy through noncompliance, proffering instead the communalization of social reproduction, mutual aid and wealth redistribution. In what way, though, does a networked class of art activists differ from the generalized mode of social production in today's capitalism? McKee cites in this regard Gerald Raunig, who asks: "What does it mean to strike when the continuity of the working day has been irrevocably relegated to the Fordist past?"[57] Building networks of solidarity through creative collectivity is in some respects what neoliberal capitalism expects of citizens in the context of the shift from welfare state policies and commitment to full employment to that of a singular focus on managing free trade and financial markets – a job that neoliberalism has so far failed to perform with any degree of meaningful social purpose. This is perhaps the most enigmatic question one could pose for a political social movement in the context of the network society. McKee is aware of this as he writes about Occupy Sandy and Sandy Relief, groups that after hurricane Sandy donated goods, set up communal kitchens and media centres, and organized training and relief hubs for volunteers:

> On the one hand, Occupy stepped into the void left by the negligent state and top-heavy relief organizations, responding to an urgent and real biopolitical crisis and providing undeniable help. On the other hand, the network ended up performing months of uncompensated work of the sort that a powerful city government should arguably be expected and counted upon to do.[58]

An appropriate question then, since we are dealing here with the sublation of art into life, might be what does the theory of the avant garde add to this discussion? Has the avant garde become an NGO agency, administering the servicing of goods? Has its "orthodox" association with dialectical and historical materialism been exhausted by the new language of biopower, difference and networks? Certainly the main thrust of OWS was that it reasserted questions of political solidarity in the face of economic instability and insecurity, extending afterwards into the environmentalism and race politics of 350.org, Flood Wall Street, People's Climate March, Liberate Tate, Art Against Police, Black Lives Matter and Direct Action Front for Palestine. The remaining task to be accomplished, according to McKee, is for such collective power to be "scaled up" as means to challenge economic dispossession and state violence. An avant garde would thus be those individuals and groups who use artistic capacities and imaginaries to facilitate this movement of anti-capitalist emancipation.[59]

Occupy the Avant Garde

Is there a network of the avant garde? Are there many? Do the "creative direct action" groups that formed around and in the wake of the Occupy Wall Street movement embody the new compositions to come? How does the logic of networking figure within discussions of the avant garde and vice versa? Are the new activist networks concerned with avant garde theorization and history or are its traditional modalities of negation, alienation and vanguardism anathema to the logic of horizontalist direct democracy or to the deterritorializing protocols of biopolitical networking? Some answers to these questions might be gleaned from the online discussion about McKee's *Strike Art* that was convened and mediated by Gregory Sholette in April of 2016 on the *e-flux conversations* web site.[60] In advance of this exchange Sholette e-mailed some 50 people to invite them to the forum and to recommend that they prepare by reading McKee's book. Sholette announced that in order to facilitate the conversation he would introduce the book and organize the conversation into three sets of discussions preceded by three thematic questions concerning 1) Occupy and the return of avant-garde art, 2) Occupy and twenty-first-century left politics, and 3) whether or not there is an ethos of radical left scholarship. The invited participants, artists as well as theorists, included Marco Baravalle, Zoe Beloff, Claire Bishop, Kim Charnley, T.J. Demos, Stephen Duncombe, Charles Esche, Gavin Grindon, Shannon Jackson, Olga Kopenkina, Suzanne Lacy, Pedro Lasch, Lucy Lippard, Alan A. Moore, Alan W. Moore, Martha Rosler, Stevphen Shukaitis, Blake Stimson, Nato Thompson, Dmitry Vilensky, Joanna Warsza, Occupy Museums, G.U.L.F. and myself.

Sholette's introduction underscores the way that *Strike Art* brings art together with left politics through the lens of OWS. McKee's partisanship and

participation in OWS and its afterlife is noted, as is his deep appreciation and knowledge of its organizational ambitions, which links distinct radicalized artists to a new political imaginary. Sholette casts some doubt as to the commonality of these groups and questions the verifiability of a common organizational front against the 1%. His first question addresses McKee's assertion that Occupy adopted the avant-garde dialectic of art into life. Sholette asks:

> Let's say we did agree that OWS and its afterlife represents a significant shift within contemporary art and politics, what then is at stake in describing this phenomenon as avant-garde, especially bearing in mind all of the historical, political, ontological, and aesthetic weight that this term inevitably carries with it?

The counterpoint to this, he says, is the absorption of the rhetoric of avant-gardism by business leaders and by the multi-billion dollar art market and culture industry. The artistic left imagines itself outside this privileged economy of art and it is during the 2011 Creative Time event that members of the artistic left were forced, he argues, to confront their own political contradictions and self-representation. For McKee, the Creative Time event signals the "end" of socially engaged art, meaning both its culmination and its completion or self-destruction, directing art into social engagement.

The first question solicited more than two dozen responses, a zenith for the daily *e-flux conversation* site's postings, which more often than not garner zero replies. The following summary of these is partial and selective at best. Nato Thompson's reply downplays the question of sublation, of art versus activism, appealing pragmatically to the plurality of art practices that need to be understood in context and that may very well operate from within the existing infrastructures of the art system. The activist network is therefore seen to combine relatively unproblematically with the art network. His statement provides no specific argument for art's ontological status, however, which is addressed by Zoe Beloff, who argues that art and politics cannot be collapsed into one another. In this respect she would seem to think that there is not enough avant-garde *art* available in gentrified wastelands like New York where "creative activity" is produced by anyone with an Instagram or Pinterest account. Claire Bishop, for her part, rejects using the term "avant-garde" for work made since the second half of the twentieth century, which only serves to give pedigree to contemporary art. OWS, she says, is unmoored from an organized politics and is without a coherent aesthetic outlook. The characteristic of today's socially engaged art, she contends, is a lingering sense of resignation regarding the march of neoliberalism and not, as McKee would like to imagine, its displacement into a "post-Occupy condition." Stevphen Shukaitis responds by saying that we should not worry ourselves about whether or not OWS is

avant-garde and whether we can still talk in these terms, but should instead be concerned with what it means to understand activisms like OWS as "art." This framing, he argues, echoing his book's discussion of Dada consciousness and "the avant-garde that is not one," allows for experimentation without guarantees and without concern for measurable success, in a way that is different from political rationality – a kind of Kantian purposiveness without purpose applied to all of life. The other issue he addresses is the way that OWS connects with the political economy of cultural production, where the precarity of labour links people who have realized that they have been robbed of their dreams and energy – the dark matter of not just the art world, Shukaitis says, but of the world more broadly. OWS is thus a stock-taking of shifts in class composition.

Many of the respondents reacted less to Sholette's prompt and more to the first few statements. Marco Baravalle underscores autonomist and schizo-anarchist theory, addressing the molecular practices of the OWS "machine" and its biopolitical context, both of which allowed it to have global influence. In other words, the world-wide reach of capillary communications networks aids the minor compositions of the new class compositions. Not surprisingly, Baravalle rejects the classical terms of dialectics, the sublation of art into life praxis. His view is that under the present conditions all art is subsumed by capitalism. The merging of art and life takes place, therefore, for him, within a strictly neoliberal polity. None of the respondents assumed that art and life could also potentially merge into socialist formations.

Noah Fisher, a member of the Gulf Ultra Luxury Faction, argues in favour of the notion of affinity or connection between the different activist art practices, wishing to disassociate these from art historical frameworks and existing art institutions, which are in turn supported by the 1%. Fisher mentions that many of the groups that McKee discusses are part of anarchist circles, uninterested in mainstream institutions, while others cooperate with the mainstream left art world and high-profile biennales. He proposes a dichotomy of professional/clean with noncompliant/messy but a different parsing would propose professional/messy and noncompliant/clean. Like Thompson, Fisher calls for attention to specificity and variance of political intention. He mentions how the Arts and Culture Working Group was formally connected to the OWS General Assembly and included critics and curators who were "densely networked" to the art world, but that it was also comprised of "dark matter" such as vagabonds, students and Sunday painters. "Who does it serve," he asks, "to prove that the work is a legitimate branch of avante garde [sic] and who gets to decide?" He asks this in particular since he does not think that OWS activism, even if interpreted as creative activity, advances aesthetic or conceptual practice. Activism, he argues, however important its politics, is perhaps too instrumentalized and too familiar in its objects and experiences to be significant

as avant-garde art. The main shift that Fisher notes is the way that the new social practices have challenged the capitalistic assumptions of institutions like universities and museums:

> for a few years now, an Occupy network, resulting from an intense moment of solidarity, has allowed many of us to sustain and expand a politicization of our work and powerfully scatter these politicized practices into public space. *Strike Art* is an unprecedented recounting of this terrain, which contains contradictions that if not abandoned, could truly short-circuit the definition of art at the center of the art system.

Tal Beery reflects on the contradiction that Occupy activists made a constant effort to live their politics, regardless, he says, of the proximity of the history and theory of contemporary art. It is not likely an avant garde, he concludes, but it remains socially engaged art even when it moves beyond the criteria of art.

For Rena Raedle, the avant gardes in socialist countries failed to gain ideological primacy over the capitalist world and were recuperated as art. The new social practice art connects with social movements, whose various means of communication and performance are appropriated by campaign managers in order to engage "a whole network of art-activists," culminating in new cultural commodities such as the exhibition *Beautiful Trouble – A Toolbox for Revolution.* The flipside to this is the adoption of countercultural techniques like culture jamming by institutionalized social movements. This causes Raedle to doubt whether post-Occupy groups are able to challenge the "institution art" in the manner of the historical avant gardes since they rely on both art institutions and institutionalized social movements. Nicholas Mirzoeff mentions André Breton's statement in *Nadja* that the light in a Courbet painting is similar to the fall of the Vendôme Column. Does Mirzoeff know what Breton likely did not, which is that Courbet was against the Column's destruction? What does it matter, in any case, if the point is to denounce oppression? Bring down all the columns, he says, as though they were nodes in a network of colonial statues. Alan W. Moore mentions that 2016 is the 100 year anniversary of Dada and that the task of the avant garde is to remember, all the while moving into unknown territories. Jim Costanzo celebrates the Dadaists as those who called for an end to western civilization. Like McKenzie Wark, Todd A. Young reads OWS as a psychogeography that dispels the nightmare of capitalism and allows the undead to "connect the dots" between their economic situation and their neoliberal chains.[61] The ties in the network are links in chains. Writing from Poland, Kuba Szreder suggests that *Strike Art* should be retitled *The New York Art Scene Before, During and After Occupy Wall Street*. OWS is not the

cosmic event that changed everything, he argues, but merely one in a series of responses to austerity, including aesthetic revolutions from "eons" ago. In this sense, just as New York is not the centre of resistance to global capitalism, the critic-gallery system is not the only art world. One would be tempted to respond that just like the "movement of the movements" the art market is hardly limited to New York City and that critics and criticism mean as little or as much to the field of art speculation as it does to activists. Wall Street is nevertheless in New York City.

The second question asked by Sholette addresses the relationship of left politics since the mid-1980s to the "artistic ethos" that is at work in the "prefigurative" left politics of the early twenty-first century. His question concerns the ability of the "enabling fiction" and the "ontological" and "mytho-poetic" imaginary of art to bring together diverse extra-parliamentary left movements and organizations. Sholette's argument is that American activists share only "partially overlapping ideological and socio-economic or ethnic positions." *Strike Art* would seem to suggest that the various post-Occupy groups share several features: 1) anarcho-communist notions of autonomous self-organization, 2) transgressive tactics of civil disobedience [sic: McKee only ever speaks of creative direct action and he makes little claims for tactics over strategy or for transgression over organization], and 3) anarchist prefigurative politics as against representational party politics. McKee links Graeber's notion of prefigurative politics with avant-garde aesthetics, an ethos that McKee says is apparent in the relative autonomy that art activists share with the art world and that draws from avant gardes like Dada, Surrealism and Situationism.

Among the respondents, Ricardo Dominguez states that since the 1980s he has participated in activist networks whose practices were framed as tactical, in the manner of Critical Art Ensemble or Electronic Disturbance Theatre, and in relation to media, other networks and public space. Like the Zapatistas, the Electronic Disturbance Theatre claims to see another world through its dreams, anticipating the next steps to be taken, helping the group to move away from technological action towards aesthetic disturbance. Zapatismo's prefigurative strategies resonate with the idea of an avant garde. Rebecca Zorach notes that prefiguration comes from Biblical exegesis, that it does not presume causality and that it only requires signs to be interpreted, which confirm a sacred teleological narrative. As an approach taken by the New Left since the 1970s, prefiguration implies a view of the society one would wish to see, which actually works against the idea of revolution as historical rupture. The shift from strategic to prefigurative politics, she argues, is similar to the shift in art from finished objects to process, or in business from a manufacturing to a service economy. Zorach perceptively refers to prefigurative politics as a radical immanence that has no particular claim on futurity but rather on the now and on figuration, which she says appeals to the artistic sensibility. In politics this

implies that artists would have a special role in modeling the future for others, or, in a more limited way, for themselves in terms of self-fashioning. The radicality of OWS, she argues, is that it allowed people to develop relationships based on the urgencies of the present that did not require that they be the vanguard of anything.

Adeola Enigbokan says that the left is itself an "enabling fiction" that requires that the rituals of art be routinely recreated. On the other hand, she says, based on the books produced before and after OWS, the left is an "alarmingly efficient industry" that is dominated by white western men. McKee's comparison of OWS with the Arab Spring and the encampments of Syntagma Square is criticized for its universalizing implications and for not addressing the specificity of each movement. "What," she asks, "is the real basis of drawing all these people together in the same 'wave' or 'multitude'?"

> While Yates and David [Graeber], and 'artists,' and others involved in this Left industry can dip into the multitudes and then head up front into 'the avant-garde,' becoming individual people with 'names,' and 'thoughts' as they wish, the (mostly brown) multitudes stay faceless, like the multitudes in old Hollywood epics, such as the Ten Commandments.

The left, therefore, according to Enigbokan, overestimates its ability to ally with others. Her argument very problematically ignores the theoretical concept of uneven development and almost all of left history, from the Haitian Revolution and the post-colonial movements for national independence to the Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Iranian Revolutions. It is perhaps all too typical in this regard of the identity politics and social constructionism of contemporary postmodern and decolonial studies. Regardless, her statements do reflect certain aspects of network theory, which is the tendency of a smaller number of high volume nodes to dominate a network and to direct the flow of information, as well as the tendency of networks to reproduce rather than radically alter pre-existing social inequalities. But this also gives us all the more reason to ignore network ideology if it causes us to resort to massism. Enigbokan's solution to this, in any case, is impractical and idealistic, assuming that we can escape all fictions and discover, behind or alongside the media of global society, the "actual lives lived."

My own contribution mentions the need for a stronger ideology for both avant-garde art and politics, as against the tendency to collapse these into the immanentism of media culture and neoliberal social relations. If one is to be concerned with totality – Occupy as an artistic totality – one has to understand the relevance of dialectical materialism to the immanentist arguments of autonomist Marxism. I address Henri Lefebvre's argument that alienation

would continue to exist in even a communist society and so prefiguration is a utopian concept that deserves rethinking. In similar terms, misrecognition, as psychoanalysis understands it, cannot be wished away and the unconscious cannot be simply forced in the direction of consciousness. Those things that are repressed return as symptoms – they do not return as such. The Surrealist avant garde, mentioned by McKee in relation to Graeber's comparison of ethnographic Surrealism and prefigurative politics, was roundly criticized by Lefebvre in his *Critique of Everyday Life*, where he makes the observation that "[t]he Surrealists promised a new world, but they merely delivered 'mysteries of Paris'," this being a reference to Marx's critique of the novelist Eugène Sue. "They promised a new faith, but did that really mean anything?"[62] For Lefebvre, just as for the Situationists, the Surrealist avant garde had come to a dead end around 1930 since it translated struggle into literary alienation. If there is to be a revolution, it would be a revolution of and within the everyday. For Lefebvre, I argue, being aware that you are alienated is the first step towards disalienation. This is what is meant by the supersession of art and why it is accurate to describe the art practices involved in OWS as avant-garde. After the dematerialization and deskilling of art brought about by conceptualism, the development of art into an expanded field of politics and everyday life allows for links to be redrawn with the former historical avant gardes, something which is well demonstrated by Bishop's book on participation in art.[63] Against this, I argue, the subsumption of labour under post-Fordism functions through networks that extend feedback mechanisms to the magnitude of self-reinforcement and semio-inflation, as Berardi has argued. This is why the question of the avant garde causes bewilderment to even those people who could most easily be considered vanguard. Because people can no longer see themselves outside of biocapitalism's technosocial automatisms they no longer try. And so we are caught between two deaths, as Žižek says, between an ontological imaginary and a heteronomy of biocapitalist immanence. The question of ontological failure reinscribes ideology. The concept of strike art, then, is a wonderful expression, an end of art historicity representing a largely unsymbolizable class struggle, the division between division and non-division. The kinds of practices described in *Strike Art* create use values that lead beyond the art world and that fight against the devaluation of life and labour. It is a revolutionary politicization of art in advance of neoliberal culture and that renews the programme of avant-garde struggle.

Stephen Duncombe argues that protest movements should be able to interface with representative institutions, despite the global flows of decentred power. He recalls how initiating connections through Internet dial-up used to imply a digital "handshake." Protest groups do not need to agree with one another, he says, or share the same meta-philosophy, they only require a shared protocol that allows them to communicate. Occupations are a new way of

dealing with the protocol problem by creating a platform that supports thinking, learning, organizing and performing. Occupation is a tactic and not a sustainable mode of political organization. Art, Duncombe says, is also tactical since the reception of art is not something that artists can control. He concludes that the performative spectacles of media-ready protests do not work as the kind of organizational power that is required to bring about sustainable social change.

Mayaan Magazine makes the observation regarding prefiguration that the artistic practices and lifestyles of the past anticipated the current precarious labour conditions, a view that reiterates the rise of the "artistic critique" according to Boltanski and Chiapello. Prefigurative politics are therefore not avant-garde, but an alternative that is immanent to the current neoliberal "spirit" of capitalism, a contradiction, Mayaan remarks, that is similar to the vacillations among the *e-flux* conversationists between the reformist presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders and autonomist networks. The statement does not ignore that some revolutionary positions were also put forward but suggests that these be evaluated against the Soviet experience. In contrast, Steve Lyons of the group Not An Alternative argues against the common sense horizontalism of *Strike Art* and the tendency of social movements since 1968 to have an unquestioned faith in prefigurative politics and temporary spontaneous direct actions against that of long-term strategic planning. Lyons' argument in favour of a collective political subject, tight organizational forms and institutional structures runs across one of the key stumbling blocks of such a politics, the conditions of labour and exploitation in the neoliberal mode of production – the real subsumption of labour that alters the basis of organized politics.

This question of the link between ideology and mode of production would seem to be acknowledged by Shannon Jackson, who wonders whether the "art into life" paradigm is useful for today's prefigurative needs. Do post-Occupy projects on the environment, racism, debt reform, gentrification or immigration have a formal coherence, she asks, and does the study and representation of such extra-institutional practices force them into the professional "apparatus" of the contemporary art world, including its markets, museums and histories of the avant garde? The example she gives is the 2011 Creative Time exhibition *Living as Form*. As the event took place, she was busy checking e-mails and text messages about a group "taking over Wall Street." Jackson says that the art into life binary brings forward the twentieth-century work-into-life problematic. In each case, "life" seems to suggest a free space of self-fashioning, which allows it to be more easily appropriated by neoliberal capitalism. Art into life, she proposes, ignores the fact that it is work and labour that provide the conditions of life. Her statements, however, are unseemly when one addresses the politics of OWS, which Lyons correctly notes were taken up by the Sanders campaign. The counterpoint, according to Not An Alternative, is

to occupy that campaign and party, which to some extent was effectuated by Kashma Sawant and the #movement4Bernie campaign, which, after Sanders' capitulation to Hillary Clinton, morphed into #movementforthe99%. After the betrayal of the Sanders campaign by the Democratic Party Convention and the election of Trump, activists continue to call on Sanders to spearhead a third party alternative.

The third and last *e-flux conversation* question generated many responses but also reiterated views already expressed. Sholette's question deals with radical scholarship as a specialized sector that exists in close proximity with academia and the art system, a system that produces leftist artists and intellectuals who in turn reproduce the art system. Publications on art and activism by writers such as Brian Holmes, Nato Thompson, Stevphen Shukaitis, John Roberts, Claire Bishop, Tom Finkelpearl, Shannon Jackson, Stephen Wright, Alan W. Moore, Boris Groys, Gavin Grindon, Peter Weibel, Charles Esche, Grant Kester, Ben Davis, Yates McKee and Gregory Sholette provide more than enough proof that artistic concerns have changed considerably in the last decade or more. For their part, institutions are reflecting an "unarticulated détente with neoliberal capitalism." The complicity of art with global capital causes us to wonder what is contemporary art and what do we owe it? Is there, Sholette asks, a "hermeneutics appropriate to a different species of twenty-first-century artistic practice" that would not give way to expert culture and conventional modes of criticism, canonization and judgement?

The question itself more than adequately sums up the problem of recuperation but possibly also an ethos of not networking, acknowledging the workings of ideology today. Mine is the first reply to Sholette's question and in order to address Jackson's statement I mention the obvious fact that Bürger's art-into-life thesis is a Marxist theory that directly addresses the question of labour and class society. I mention Roberts' *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* as an example of theory that is part of this new wave of scholarship on activism but that also benefits from an understanding of the Hegelian, Marxist and Frankfurt School traditions, proposing what I have termed, after Badiou, a fidelity to the avant garde hypothesis in contemporary engaged culture. The presupposed shift from big ideological struggles towards micro-politics and networked sociality is a process that subtends the actuality of capitalism as our collective horizon. It is often assumed, I argue, that society exists in advance and beyond institutions as a spontaneous and organic assemblage of singularities devoid of ideology. However, in the haste to dismantle institutions and after decades of neoconservative attacks on public infrastructures, precarious "no-collar" subjects are submitted to potentially more free market chaos than their Fordist predecessors. Because of this many who are informed by micro-politics believe that global capitalism serves them better than socialism. The failure of the Sanders campaign as the ostensible Occupy candidate, I

argue, demonstrates that the labour and activity of the constituent power of the multitude must not only be idealized but must be further organized in the direction of radical change.

Nicholas Mirzoeff counters that OWS failed because its efforts were not grounded enough in anti-racism, a problem that was reproduced by Strike Debt and then corrected in later efforts such as the Black Out Tour of the American Museum of Natural History and the G.U.L.F. occupation of the Guggenheim Museum.[64] Mirzoeff nevertheless points to the corruption of major museums that act as artwashing machines for corporations and high finance. We cannot leave museums and the art world behind, he says, but we can decolonize it. Caroline Woolard mentions in this regard that participants were creating value for *e-flux* and that such value should be collectively owned. A prefigurative politics would see to it that *e-flux* becomes a cooperative.

Blake Stimson worries that our efforts to seek an exit from the institutions we inherited, or to assume a new kind of art and intellectual species, comes around to the unquestioned ideology of modernism and its emphasis on difference and the new as a kind of romantic anti-capitalism that is co-terminous with capitalism's dedication to "creative destruction."[65] Marx did not emphasize the Hegelian anti-aesthetic new, he says, but the question of need and necessity, an anti-anti-aesthetic based on sensory experience, which opens up to the body politic and class consciousness. Such consciousness, he argues, can never be about prefiguration or endless rhizomatic becoming but rather freedom from capitalism's *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all). Kuba Szreder, in contrast, tends to agree with Sholette about the new roles of institutions and new kinds of an-art and post-art practices: "museum is not a center of artistic universe […] museum is merely an information point." Open forms like digital prints and video files downloaded from the Internet, he says, need not be turned into collectible art objects. The true resources are the time and attention of the audience. Jim Costanzo places OWS in the context of "interlocking communication networks" that include the Battle in Seattle and the People's Climate March.

Sholette replies that leftist artists have long sought to "exit" art – an "escapology" according to Stephen Wright – and that this has reached a new level of intensity that springs from mass alienation.[66] If one looks at the political economy of art and not only its celebrity showcase, one finds a collective social productivity through which workers now see themselves as a category in itself and for itself – a realization that is enhanced by the "capitalist networks of the Internet." One can notice this for instance in the work of W.A.G.E. and BFAMFAPhD, art groups that understand their activity as a source of labour value. Their anti-aesthetic romanticism is dialectically contradictory, complicit with capitalism but seeking different possibilities, a sentiment that in *Strike Art* becomes self-conscious activity. Sholette also cites Hardt and Negri, who

describe the resistances of alienated subjects as a "combined productivity" and whose actions "are not reducible to each other." Rejecting statements that tend to reiterate the idea of neoliberal capture and cooptation, Sholette declares: "mini-rebellions and radical sentiments are not revolutionary per se, but neither are they only proto-entrepreneurial fodder for neoliberalism."

I further argue for a Lacanian approach that can address the ways in which the biocapitalist conditions of networked communication lead to a weakening of symbolic efficiency and therefore our belief in the authority and functions of institutions, whether they are museums or political movements. It may be that the Discourse of the Master and the Discourse of the Analyst belong to an earlier "bourgeois" epoch and that what predominates today are the discourse of the University and Hysteric, an issue I address in detail in the following two chapters. For the remainder of the conversation, it is interesting to note Shannon Jackson's acknowledgement of an alternative professionalism, stating that Sholette's emphasis on a specialized radicals' discourse understands the "network of activity around contemporary art" as a social formation of "experts" with their own assumptions and blind spots. Many artists and organizers have no interest or connection to this specialized field, she argues, nor would they demand an exodus from institutions since they are more concerned with building support structures, which requires skills other than the "avant-garde training" that is offered in the academy. And so alongside Cottington's "alternative professionalism," Jackson perceives OWS as a sort of off-off-broadway activist subcatergory.

A final word goes to Angela Dimitrakaki, who states that radical scholarship, however specialized, falls under the same category as the work produced by precarious artists, a "commons of oppression" that features suppressed wages and unremunerated labour, defunding of humanities research, performance assessment metrics, labour insecurity and fierce competition. Activist artists who are wary of institutions sometimes ignore the conditions of those who work in universities and museums and with whom they could make common cause. The blogosphere, she says, has expanded the exponential amount of radical scholarship but little of it has the means to be implemented. Radicalism turns into "democracy" at best but more usually "democracy from below," unable to affect the centre and take power away from the right. Both radical art and scholarship seek means to survive and are pledged today to a utilitarianism that institutions try to keep tabs on through an emphasis on creativity, innovation and productivity. The dilemma is that if we stay confined within the existing institutions we will not survive. What is required is a durational, transnational general strike, or what Dimitrakaki calls the Human Strike, the only real way to transform the base of the superstructure. Life into art!?

AGMP presents by arrangement with Primary Talent International
THE FALL
FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2013
CLAPHAM GRAND • LONDON
AGMP.co.uk SEETICKETS.co.uk TICKETWEB.co.uk EVENTIM.co.uk
GIGANTIC.com VIEWLONDON.co.uk STARGREEN.com SKIDDLE.com
0844 249 1000

The Fall concert poster (featuring Peter Greenway, David Spurr, Elena Poulou, Keiron Melling and Mark E. Smith), Clapham Grand, London, November 15, 2013. Courtesy of Clapham Grand.

SIX

THERE IS NO INSIDE

In a radical revolution, people not only 'realize their old (emancipatory, etc.) dreams'; rather, they have to reinvent their very modes of dreaming. Is this not the exact formula of the link between death drive and sublimation? It is only this reference to what happens after the revolution, the proverbial 'morning after,' that allows us to distinguish between libertarian pathetic outbursts and true revolutionary upheavals.
– Slavoj Žižek, *Heiner Müller Out of Joint*

It's a constant state of battle.
– Mark E. Smith

Occupy Wall Street did not endorse the form of the communist party but it did link politics and aesthetics to a radical act of negation with historical potential as an anti-capitalist vanguard. What would it mean to be a party artist today when there are few communist parties that radical artists and intellectuals would want to belong to? What does Walter Benjamin's "author as producer" mean in a post-Fordist universe in which avant-garde art makes more sense as self-abolition into networked biocapitalist activism than as proletarian class struggle.[1] To be sure, activism is kicking off everywhere, but how long will it be before activism's supersession of autonomy into an expanded field of post-art finds its rightist appropriations in yet another wave of the dialectic of decadence? If flash mobs have been organized for hipster fun as much as tactical direct action, can alter-networks not be exploited by mainstream

social media platforms and the creative industry at large? Under post-Fordism, according to Pascal Gielen, all immaterial production is exchanged as commodity.[2] A scene that accommodates heterodox forms, whether as a network, an innovative cultural practice, or an alternative lifestyle, and especially if it is marked as "avant-garde," "alternative," or "independent," can rank as a welcome brand of authenticity in the economic epicentre as well as serve to produce social cohesion within what Cottington refers to as the professional arts sector. Scenes, in fact, appear as a more "ideal form of social organization in the present network society."[3] The only thing that can interfere with the networked flows of scenes, it would seem, are large institutions like museums, spaces for the contemplation of finished works. But today's museums, as Boris Groys argues, are becoming networked platforms for temporary projects. Museums, he writes, "no longer attempt permanence but become places of temporary curatorial projects."[4] What contemporary museums propagate is a sense of the accidental and the contingent, regulating flows between the inside and outside world in a stream of creative industry activities, or what Relyea refers to as "a whole new managerial imaginary."[5] Nor is it certain nowadays that theory can do much to protest the conditions that prevail. Art thus becomes activist, receiving economic support from the state insofar as artists generate economic growth through entrepreneurial innovation and survival strategies in a digital ecosystem that is dominated by tech giants.[6] In this context, if the avant-garde artist turns to the Discourse of the Analyst as someone who is aware of the weakening of symbolic efficiency, what happens to the ontology of art as something that is not simply reducible to heterogenity? Alongside today's Discourse of the University (anti-art art, institutional critique, new institutionalism, new materialisms), Discourse of the Hysteric (anti-art, art activism, social movements) and Discourse of the Analyst (anti-anti-art, avant-garde art, communist party artists), one requires a working theory of aesthetic ontology, defined here as the Discourse of the Master (art *qua* art). This would serve to not only adapt art theory to Lacan's Four Discourses, but would support the theory of Hegelian negativity according to which I have outlined the extended conceptualization of *Don't Network*. While it is not possible to fully distinguish between art as Discourse of the Master and anti-anti-art as the Discourse of the Analyst, one can appreciate that these modalities are particularly out of joint in the context of today's aesthetic design of human capital. Because every radical action appears to be subsumed by the totality of commodity society, artistic critique turns against itself, denying autonomy, meaning, authenticity and critique, in favour of either the Discourse of the Hysteric activist, or in favour of the University Discourse as the capacity for differentiation and aestheticization of politics.

The post-punk group The Fall and its lead singer Mark E. Smith were an uncommon instance of the Discourse of the Master in the realm of popular music.

The Fall's aesthetic and imagination was not satisfied with ascension into either the symbolic economy of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame or the countercultural art scene. It was an art that was aware that the rules of art are inconsistent but that refused all the same to make a spiritualized art commodity. In contrast to the art strike and strike art options, we can refer to their practice as a work to rule strategy within the field of capitalized cultural production. Playing by the rules of the music game, yet resisting industry control, The Fall refused to make art and went on to make art anyhow. Artistic expression in The Fall was exemplary of the Master's Discourse insofar as it took the form of phallic enjoyment, with Smith as the father who enjoys. The Fall's productivity over the last four decades – with 31 albums, 60 singles, 40 live albums and 45 compilation albums to their credit, as well as books, videos and radio sessions – attests to the abyssal desire for the Fall *Thing*, which confronted listeners as an acerbic musical and cultural experience. However, unlike other popular music groups, The Fall's perseverance appeared as a feature of its lead singer's individual motivation. Through Mark E. Smith's work ethic and alienation, The Fall was fetishistically unaware of the formal relations that condition artistic production in the music industry. They were not, in this sense, immune to the cultural logic of capitalism. Had they been more aware of this, as an avant-garde group, they would have been more concerned with not only the critique of the music industry but of capitalism at large, refusing, like Benjamin's party artist, to feed the apparatus of production. But The Fall just got on with it, often to the point of breakdown. As Dave Simpson put it already one decade ago:

> The sheer longevity of The Fall is an achievement in itself. Through times when many bands have been lucky enough to make it to a second album, they have outlasted five prime ministers, the rise and decline of Thatcherism and New Labour, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Falklands conflict, Bosnia, two Iraq wars, the fluctuating fortunes of many of England's bigger football clubs – including Smith's treasured Manchester City – and some terrifying vagaries of fashion.[7]

The Fall project came to an end on January 24, 2018, when Smith died from lung and kidney cancer. Although the group had stopped touring for a while due to his condition, their last gigs included Smith performing in a wheelchair. Like Ulysses tied to his ship's mast in order to resist the call of the sirens, The Fall produced critiques of the music scene at the same time that Smith urged his bandmates – in the later years through semi-demonic growling – to keep the enterprise moving.

One immediate qualification of The Fall is that it was a working-class band, which one could distinguish from politically engaged musicians like Billy Bragg,

Gang of Four and Rage Against the Machine. They were also working-class in their defiance of the prog rock pyrotechnics of groups like King Crimson and Yes. The Fall had few illusions about overcoming class relations by altering the field of cultural production through formal innovation, as Theodor Adorno might have proposed, and as noticed for instance in avant-garde projects like Henry Cow and Red Krayola, but they were nevertheless not disabused of the social relations of exploitation, which was screened in their work through the motivation to keep on as a group. The pressures of survival were formally registered in The Fall's garage band aesthetic, which they proffered as a refusal of selling out to either political activism or to an art of romantic sensuality, as found for instance in Joy Division, The Cure, Cocteau Twins or Echo & The Bunnymen. Despite their fondness for other bands, The Fall could be understood through Adorno's view that every true artist is engaged in a struggle with every other artist.[8] The Fall was The Fall and nothing else. However, unlike much avant-garde art, their working-class music was not so much a metaphor for political revolution as for anti-conformist rebellion. We might also say that unlike much of the rock and rockabilly music that inspired their work, their music was not a metaphor for sex either. The Fall did not produce an authentic act, in Žižek's sense of the term. They did not undermine the hold that the culture industry had on them. Rather, The Fall persevered. Ultimately, the big Other for The Fall was not capitalist class relations, but rather, the music industry. This is why, according to Smith, punk bands like The Clash and The Jam did't get it. The purpose of the Fall master was therefore to designate itself as the *objet a* of class relations, expressed in terms of surplus aesthetics. As Smith became the boss of his team he perversely occupied the place of jouissance that allowed the group to stand firm, album after album, all the while refusing the usual rewards and traps that would defame The Fall as having sold out in order to escape the relations of domination. The paradoxical lesson of The Fall is not that there is no outside to capitalism but that there is no inside. You cannot occupy capitalism as a means to control its destructive tendencies.

His Master's Jouissance

To understand the idea of art in terms of Lacan's Discourse of the Master is to appreciate why and how it is that activists often make use of a simplified version of art ontology with which to build productive use values in the social world. In Groys's estimation, this can only lead to a certain instrumentalization since the logic of art is its ontological uselessness, which, according to him, condemns activist art to failure.[9] Art should not operate as a hidden symptom, or as the latent supposition of an avant-garde practice, but should rather take command as an overt desire. In this sense, the surplus aesthetics that one finds in The Fall would shift from being a by-product to being the

site of the intervention of the Real. For this to happen, one needs to understand the means by which the Discourse of the Master is a stage towards the Discourse of the Analyst.

As the need for communism becomes more pronounced, Žižek has shifted his view of the party as analyst to a more general discussion of the master. It is possible that he has done this since master interventions are more easily occasioned by autonomous agents, for instance in the whistleblowing actions of Julian Assange (WikiLeaks), Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, to more socially mediated events like Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, Nuit Debout and MeToo, or the protests against the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, or the March For Our Lives protests against school shootings. In *Revolution at the Gates*, Žižek wonders why Marxism-Leninism cannot be put into practice, why it is that class struggle and the organization of the dictatorship of the proletariat appear today as zombie concepts.[10] His interest is nevertheless in the genius of Lenin, who managed to impose his vision as a means to confront political confusion. Lenin ignored the bourgeois nomenklatura and led the October Revolution to topple the Tsarist regime, making the Russia of his time the most democratic country in all of Europe, with freedom of the press and freedom of organization for the masses. Lenin's criticism, according to Žižek, was directed against those who sought guarantees for the revolution. This is the difference between an objective view and an engaged involvement in a situation. Having learned lessons he could not have known beforehand, Lenin in *State and Revolution* proposed a more modest project based on his newfound awareness of the limitations of Bolshevik power. The best one could hope for from the communist revolution was state-regulated capitalism and the general education of the masses. Anything else would be the false promulgation of communist propaganda on an unreceptive and uninterested population. Lenin is thus not a figure of ideological certainty and dogma, but someone who is able to think the exception that challenges the prevailing order. Žižek writes that Lenin, "stands for the compelling freedom to suspend the state of existing (post-)ideological coordinates, the debilitating *Denkverbot* (prohibition on thinking) in which we live – it simply means that we are allowed to think again."[11]

The contradictions of capitalist realism are such that thought and culture are located today in the field of the precarious, indebted masses, the exploited who support knowledge production. This is what Lacan refers to as the Discourse of the University, the all-knowing field of technocratic, cybernanthropic bureaucracy.[12] For Žižek, the prohibition on thinking is apparent when one questions the liberal consensus with what then appear to be outdated ideological positions, against which this discourse proposes its technological solutions and post-ideological consensus. Such liberal fundamentalism has as its purpose the creation of a sense that we live in a society of free choices, which

masks the fact that for neoliberalism there is no alternative to capitalism.[13] The reduction of politics to forces of production risks accepting the rule of hegemonic ideological coordinates. To be concrete and to be materialist means to be partisan, with priority given to subjective or theoretical mediation over objective conditions.[14] The two cannot be reconciled in a binary synthesis. The way to assert materialism, Žižek argues, is not to hold to material reality beyond subjectivity, but to insist on the inherence of the external obstacle in ideology.[15] Consciousness is therefore outside of reality, allowing reality to be both an object of cognition and transformation. The paradox, especially for liberal fundamentalism, is the fact that reality is not simply there to be manipulated since full consciousness is impossible. For Žižek, society is not a positive field, which is one way to explain the appearance of politics and aesthetics in human affairs.

If society is not fully positivized, does this mean that we live in a nihilistic universe that can be captured by any ideological appropriation? What difference is there between Margaret Thatcher saying that society does not exist and Lacan proposing the same thing? If class struggle is Marx's answer to the enigma of commodification, what advantage does class struggle have in contrast to some other relation? The answer revolves around the question of knowledge. In Lacanese, knowledge is S2, the chain of signifiers, and the master is S1, the master signifier that makes an intervention in the field of knowledge. Lacan's master signifier alters the synchronic structuralism of Saussure, but due to the relationship between Imaginary, Symbolic and Real, the appearance of S1 is not a simple lever that makes the machine move, but is rather an absent cause whose result is that the machine is not a machine. Knowledge in the Lacanian universe is therefore not a nihilistic relativism, but a relationship to truth. Truth appears where there is ideology and where there are stakes between neutral, objective knowledge, and a partial, partisan or subjective truth. One cannot exist without the other, the universal and its contingent bearer. What makes class struggle different from rightist populism is this preservation of the category of an objective, neutral background, which for Lacan represents the externality of the big Other. This is where psychoanalysis and the Discourse of the Analyst enter into political and cultural theory. Because the big Other does not exist, someone or something has to stand in for the big Other. The analyst can carry cultural knowledge as the subject supposed to know, with the art audience in this case as the subject supposed to believe. If the working class cannot recognize itself in the offerings of the capitalist culture industry, and if when it does so, it is only as mediated by capitalist class interests, the analyst can intervene by embodying the externality of belief, carrying class struggle to the level of universal truth. The avant-garde artist is thus, like the analyst, a foreign object, the object-cause of the subject's desire.[16]

Form and formalization are essential as instances of the Real of an antagonism. Form, as Žižek says, distorts its content. In class struggle, either the capitalist class or the working class will impose itself as the universal class. In liberal fundamentalism, class appears as an outdated concept, replaced by the cultural conflicts between nations, as well as between men and women, blacks and whites, gays and straights. Given the overriding Real of class struggle, the paradox of culture wars is that they seem unable to fathom why the material reality of working class existence appears outmoded. To identify as working-class means to misrecognize the new social relations and modes of production that generate surplus under post-Fordism. In *Trouble in Paradise*, Žižek contrasts the true event of any potential communism with the hedonist utilitarianism of biopolitics and the pseudo-activism of fascist conflict.[17] The difference between culture wars and universal emancipation is that the culture wars are either a zero sum conflict or an equivocal democratic pluralism. Class struggle, in contrast, proposes liberation from particularism. For Marx, this means liberation from wage relations. For most socialists, this means the ability to choose one's work in conditions beyond the terror of economic insecurity.

Global market competition implies a capitalist conflict between classes that has no specific gender, racial or sexual substance. If there is no question of returning to local pre-capitalist languages and cultures, postmodernism and to some extent even post-politics effect a strange distortion of ideology by suggesting that the category of the working class is obsolete. This is absurd insofar as increasingly more of the world's population is entering the ranks of the industrial proletariat. The working class is in actuality the future of humanity and the bourgeoisie is its enabling mediator. As Žižek argues, being an authentic revolutionary has nothing to do with dressing and acting like a worker, imitating accents and lifestyles. The god of revolution, he writes, is to alter circumstances "so that workers themselves will no longer be 'workers'."[18] Corporate capitalism, however, prefers to replace the conflict in ideology with the conflict between identities.[19] Academic cultural studies are only too happy to comply with a University Discourse that eliminates the communist master signifier. The conundrum of today's left is that no one trusts neoliberal technocratic elites, yet one falsely assumes that neoliberal politics are not ideologically active at the level of new materialisms, protest politics and culture wars. It is in this context that the function of a master is required to enact an authentic rather than cynically false division.[20] Division, Žižek argues, is the only path to unity. The issue for the left is not simply that one has to choose between autonomist horizontalism against subordination to a communist party master but that liberal fundamentalism, through its new technologies and platforms, has already made this choice for you. One must simply wake up and smell the decaffeinated politics.

Žižek's arguments concerning the vanguard as master signifier follows Badiou's view that society needs to practice fidelity to a Truth-Event. The truth event is generic and produces sameness rather than circulating signifiers of plurality. Whereas new social movements create an ambience of democratic inclusion, communist politics require leaders who are willing to lead, and who allow other subjects to emerge in the tension between individual particularity and generic universality. As Žižek puts it, "[t]he supreme paradox of political dynamics is that a Master is needed to pull individuals out of the quagmire of their inertia and motivate them towards the self-transcending emancipatory struggle for freedom."[21] As he puts it elsewhere:

> A Master is a vanishing mediator who gives you back to yourself, who delivers you to the abyss of your freedom: when we listen to a true leader, we discover what we want (or rather, what we always already wanted without knowing it). A Master is needed because we cannot accede to our freedom directly – to gain this access we have to be pushed from outside, since our 'natural state' is one of inert hedonism, of what Badiou calls the 'human animal.' The underlying paradox here is that the more we live as 'free individuals with no Master,' the more we are effectively non-free, caught within the existing frame of possibilities – we have to be impelled or disturbed into freedom by a Master.[22]

Progress does not take the path of narcissistic reflection. The paradox of the master, for Žižek, is that it is an imposter. The point of psychoanalysis is to dissolve the need for the master as the subject supposed to know. The master is not the ultimate reference point for any field of practice, whether we are speaking of politics or culture. Yet, for emancipatory movements, the function of the master, or in our case of vanguards, is necessary. In this regard, Žižek argues: "we should shamelessly reassert the idea of 'vanguard,' when one part of a progressive movement assumes leadership and mobilizes other parts."[23] What distinguishes a vanguard is its fidelity to its own vision, refusing to compromise on it. In contrast to a fascist demagogue, a vanguard does not pretend to know better than the people what they really want and so does not enforce its vision on people against their will.[24] Rather, a master frees us from what makes us slaves. On the question of rights and duties, Žižek says that the master is not an agent of prohibition, telling others what they cannot do or what they should do, but an agent who encourages others to be involved in their own liberation. For a political process, a vanguard needs to be invented and organized as a symbolic authority. For a cultural process, however, the authority of the vanguard can be all the more authoritarian, telling people what they want

rather than allowing them to discover the truth for themselves. One does not listen to a musical composition the same way that one listens to a political speech. The artistic avant garde therefore has a more subjective determination than the political vanguard. This is the reason for its greater expressive range but also for its relative distance from the field of power. This is perhaps only one reason why it is best to approach The Fall as master rather than analyst.

Lost in Music

With a prolific output over four decades, seven full-length books and thousands of magazine and press articles on The Fall, it is easy enough to either plunge into a world of anecdote or to do what Mark E. Smith did not like very much, which is repeat what previous journalists and authors have already said, usually by citing Smith himself. In order to highlight how it is that The Fall rejected the culture of creative industry networking, however, it will be necessary to reproduce many of the clichés that Fall fans are familiar with and refer especially to the better documented first two decades of their work. If the question of authorship is difficult to assess in the case of cinema, it is a particularly pernicious matter in the case of The Fall. Involving more than 60 band members over the years, with 50 line-up changes, and with only Mark E. Smith as the sole abiding force behind the Fall sound, it seems fair enough to agree with his motto that "If it's me and your granny on bongos, it's The Fall." Most Fall accounts therefore focus on Smith as front man for the group but also as the cornerstone to the very idea of what The Fall was and what it stood for. If, as Badiou argues, there is nothing of any interest in a work of art that comes from the study of the life of the artist, then the purpose of the Discourse of the University is to transform all of the desiderata of an artist's existence and make it into meaningful, if not marketable surplus.

The story of The Fall begins in the 1970s in deindustrialized Manchester. Smith was born in Broughton, in a working-class Jewish neighbourhood near Sedgley Park and close to where the Manchester United football club trained. His grandfather owned a plumbing business near Strangeways Prison and would often hire ex-convicts. His father, Frederick Smith, also worked as a plumber, and his mother, Irene Smith, worked as a post office clerk. There was little music played in the Smith household until a record player was purchased. Smith's strong sense of individualism and outsider philosophy was reflected in his preference for City over United and for Black Sabbath over The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Monkees. As a teenager he worked in a meat factory and then as a shipping clerk on the Manchester docks. After The Fall started he lived in Prestwich in an apartment on Rectory Lane, one street over from where his parents and one of his three sisters still lived. Smith claims that his first ambition was to be a writer rather than a musician, but this changed

when his girlfriend Una Baines suggested he could transform his poetry into lyrics. The local Manchester music scene at the time put on concerts by Mott the Hoople, T-Rex, Lou Reed and The Who. Famously, the city was energized by two performances by The Sex Pistols in 1976. While the first show on June 4 attracted only a few people, the second show on July 20 garnered an audience of over 400. Smith attended the second show and was duly influenced: "I was totally bowled over. I got my hair cut soon after. I could see something was happening."[25] Smith says:

> We came away certain that we could do a lot better than that. I mean, I loved the Pistols, really. I loved Johnny Rotten's vocals. I certainly connected with that. The way he used his non voice. That was absolutely fantastic even though, in many respects, the Pistols were a pretty bad heavy metal band.[26]

The influence of John Lyon is noticeable in Smith's singing, not only in its acerbic sarcasm but in the way Smith ends his lines with the characteristic "uhhh," which is less shrill than Rotten's "aayyyyehhh" and which allows his lyrics to rhyme without great effort. Although The Fall emerged in the midst of the punk explosion, its orientation was informed by garage music and animosity towards glam rock. Other local acts of the time were Slaughter & The Dogs, The Drones and The Buzzcocks. What made The Fall a punk-influenced group, however, was the notion of musical simplicity. According to Smith:

> The best thing about [punk] was that it didn't rely on perfection; you didn't have to be a well-schooled musician to be a punk. But, as with many scenes, it became very conservative – with everybody dressing the same and avoiding those that didn't. Small wonder they soon ran out of things to say.[27]

What made The Fall post-punk, however, was its experimental and intellectual stance, which challenged the more nihilistic complacency of the "blank generation." According to Fall acolyte John Cooper Clarke, the new wave music that emerged heralded the arrival of the working class into the realms of Dada and Surrealism, a phenomenon that created moral panic in the British press.[28] Typically contrarian, Smith opposed punk fashions with thrift-store styling. Fall players appeared the same on stage as off stage, with no posturing and without running after press publicity. Smith's long overcoat, which he later gave to Echo & The Bunnymen lead singer Ian McCulloch, became the signature style of the late 70s crossover from post-punk to neo-romantic.

The first Fall gig was held at the North West Arts venue, organized by the Manchester Musicians' Collective, along with a socialist brass band and

an avant-garde composer who made music with bird noises. Although there was close to only twenty audience members in attendance, The Fall made a solid start, playing only original material and no covers. Songs included 'Hey! Fascist,' 'Race Hatred' and 'Psycho Mafia,' the latter of which was named after a gang Smith had started while a schoolboy. The music was awkward and slightly out of tune yet forceful. A second gig took place on June 3, 1977, at the "Stuff the [Queen's] Jubilee" festival at The Squat, a Manchester location squatted by a communist promotion company, Music Force, which was led by Durutti Column drummer Bruce Mitchell and Martin Hannett, the producer of Joy Division and Buzzcocks. The Manchester scene grew to include The Worst, The Negatives, John the Postman, Warsaw (Joy Division) and The Drones. Nearby Edinburgh played better-known acts like The Jam, The Clash, The Stranglers, The Adverts, Talking Heads, The Ramones, Magazine and Steel Pulse. After Buzzcocks released *Spiral Scratch* in 1977, their manager, Richard Boone, offered to pay for The Fall's first album and take them on tour. In a 1981 interview, Smith explained The Fall philosophy:

> We're from the North of England and have a very working-class attitude whereby we don't sort of, um, take crap for the sake of it. So I think it is a big deal to be in a sort of band, because in the North of England, you know, stars and that sort of thing are looked down on. They're so far away from the average man's day-to-day existence. The Beatles were disliked in the North of England.[29]

The Fall had no intention of riding the punk wave, which the song 'Repetition' referred to as "sycophancic music," and which declares that the band would never loose its "three Rs" – repetition, repetition, repetition. Chairman Mao, they say, digs repetition, and punk could be compared to a mental hospital that puts electrodes in your brain. The combination of formal rock experimentation with bitter invective led *NME* critic Paul Morley to compare The Fall to the "too serious" music of Henry Cow. Although taking a more decidedly pop orientation than the latter, and avoiding all progressive and jazz influence, The Fall nevertheless came across as experimental and progressive.

Smith adopted a wry stance towards Manchester, stating for the rest of his career that he did not like the notion of a Manchester scene.[30] Manchester music at the time was influenced by television impresario Tony Wilson. With his Grenada TV shows, *Grenada Reports*, *What's On*, and *So It Goes*, Wilson would bring to television any new exciting performers who played in Manchester. Wilson later started Factory Records and with his comrades established the indie label template of 50/50 deals between artist and label, defined by Wilson

and Alan Erasmus as The Movement of the 24th of January. Wilson promoted local bands, including Joy Division and John Cooper Clarke, and later The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays. Although sympathetic to The Fall, he thought that what they produced was non-music. Along with members of New Order, Wilson also opened the Hacienda nightclub, named after a Situationist text. The Hacienda eventually became the focus of the 'Madchester' acid house scene in the late 1980s, with attendance on busy nights numbering 1500 people. Despite The Fall being something of a house band at the Hacienda, Smith took his distance from the drugs and gang violence that came to characterize 'Gunchester.'[31] According to Smith, "[w]e had a deliberate policy not to get involved with the Manchester scene at all. My attitude then and it's the same now, is to not get involved in scenes."[32] During the Madchester craze, Smith moved to Edinburgh, returning only later after the hype had subsided. The Hacienda closed in 1997 from bankruptcy. Smith was nonplussed: "Stone Roses and that. They're nice lads but, I know 'em. It's just fucking show bands. It has nothing to do with me."[33] Songs on the 1991 album *Shift-Work* like 'Idiot Joy Showland,' 'Shift Work' and 'The War Against Intelligence' predict the end of working-class Manchester and its replacement by the creative class. When Michael Winterbottom asked Smith if he could include a few parts about Smith in his fictionalized Tony Wilson biopic, *24 Hour Party People* (2002), Smith reduced everything to one scene with himself outside the Hacienda and saying "yeah yeah" to Wilson, as Smith puts it, "like Marlon Brando in that Vietnam film."[34] In contrast to the spectacular aspects of the rock music lifestyle, The Fall chose to resist music industry standards and keep things pertinent to everyday existence while at the same time remaining artistically interesting.

No Anxiety for Influence

The politics of The Fall by and large fell on the shoulders of Mark E. Smith. Early on, keyboardist Una Baines had set the group in search of left politics, from feminism to the International Marxist Group. The Manchester Musicians' Collective encouraged an avant-garde direction for music. The Fall attended their meetings, and, through the influence of classically-trained musician Dick Watts, cultivated an interest in bands like the German krautrock group Can rather than follow the punk fad. Although band member and Fall originator Tony Friel was a member of the Communist Party, Smith rejected the option of joining any organization. His politics were rather influenced by his working-class background, which caused him to distrust the usual clichés, including those of the music scene's hippie sex and drug culture. Smith says: "There were no groups around that I thought represented people like me or my mates. No one was speaking to the clerks or the dockers. If I wanted to

be anything, it was a voice for those people. I wanted The Fall to be the band for people who didn't have a voice."[35] The group played Rock Against Racism events in 1977, which were associated with the Socialist Workers Party. These and similar demonstrations were organized to oppose the rise of the far-right National Front. According to Baines, Smith's politics were neither right nor left. What Smith objected to was sloganeering, populism and conformism.[36] He soon became disillusioned with RAR events as well:

> I'd always equated left-wing politics with revolution… What happens is before you go on they say, 'Will you hold this poster up?' – and it's a picture of Belsen, 'Don't let it happen again.' And I would say – we're a political *band*, that's what we *sing* about. But they want you to make announcements between songs; they see you as an entertainment – you might as well be singing country and western. […] I thought, rock against racism, I'm sort of for that, but it's a revolution, right, so if you're going to have a revolution against racism, you want a revolutionary music, which didn't happen. It didn't matter what the entertainment was, as long as the proletariat was there. Which is not what our fucking attitude is.[37]

Despite their annoyance with RAR organizers, The Fall supported their events, respecting the audiences. Smith was aware that as a visibly Northern working-class band they could become tools of the London media. This occurred sure enough at the auspices of the *New Music Express*, who wanted The Fall to lead the campaign against the National Front. *NME* journalists Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill promoted The Fall as a communist group, promising to make them the biggest band in the world. Smith thought of them as "liberal coke-snorting idiots," however, refusing the magazine cover and balking at their audacity to instruct The Fall on how to be more like The Clash.[38]

In July 1978 The Fall volunteered to take part in a three-day Manchester Carnival that was organized by the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism to oppose a National Front candidate. Yet Smith had contempt for groups that did not presume their listeners had any intelligence, including what he called "sixth-form political stuff" coming from "hand-shakers" like Bob Geldof, Gang of Four and Joe Strummer. Aware of the limits of politics coming through the music industry, Smith avoided mixing political critique with consumerism and style-conscious narcissism. "I mistrust glossy magazines that go on about equality and oppression and all that shit," Smith said, referring to Victorian do-goodism as cocktail socialism.[39] For Smith, the middle-class hippies of the sixties who rebelled against their parents turned out to be just like them. He contrasted this with the lot of the working class, who could most of the time

appreciate their parents' sacrifices.[40] Hippie rebellion was simply a worldview that Smith did not share. For the short while he and Baines studied at St. John's College he had the impression that the radicals were really focused, that is, until they became Labour party yes men.

By the mid-80s Smith's dislike of knee-jerk liberalism and his typically contrarian attitude led him to acquire a reputation as a reactionary. He supported the Falklands War and refused to play benefits during the Miners' Strike since none of the gigs were in the North, where the miners could see the shows. "I change my politics every day," he said. "Sometimes I'm a fascist, sometimes I'm a Nazi."[41] Smith opposed purity to careerism and anything that encroached on personal choice and individuality. Reminding people that Nazism was the work of doctors and lawyers, Smith argued that the threat to society is standardization: "My values are basically conservative. I don't want a fucking twat from the state telling me what to do, what to watch, it's crap."[42] Smith's views skew contemporary politics insofar as they are not uttered from the usual middle-class viewpoint. For example, at a 1986 benefit for the unemployed, he first insulted the audience by saying that they sit around doing nothing all day, only to later suggest that that is the way to go: "I think it's a great system. I think the whole idea of civilization is to get everybody on the dole, surely."[43] On the whole Smith associated liberal-left politics with opportunists who act more often than not as demagogues who ignore the views and interests of those they believe to be right-wing. Throughout his career, Smith nevertheless remained a member of the Musicians' Union.

Smith's political views are no more clarified by his pronouncements than they are by his artistic and literary influences. Unlike most punk bands, who often make direct political statements, Smith adopted the storytelling form of Country & Western music, turning his lyrics into character sketches and short stories that were inspired by his favourite sources: spy, detective and ghost stories, Batman comics, Rod Sterling's *Twilight Zone* television episodes, Thomas Hardy, Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilfred Owen, John Le Carré, Edgar Allan Poe, Raymond Chandler, Kurt Vonnegut, M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Wyndham Lewis, Malcolm Lowry, William Burroughs, H.P. Lovecraft, Philip K. Dick, Norman Mailer, Colin Wilson, George Higgins and Richard Meltzer. As Mark Fisher observed, Smith's combination of linguistic inventiveness and formal innovation destroyed the idea that culture was the exclusive preserve of the privileged and educated middle class.[44] "It was about time a fairly intelligent roots working-class band did something as opposed to art-school types," Smith said in 1979.[45] Whereas the working class was typically represented as a ghoulish underclass in detective and crime fiction, Smith enhanced this threatening potential at the same time that he underscored the conspiratorial and paranoid aspects of social life. "When you're caught up in something that has no grace," he said, "it makes

sense to take verbal revenge."[46] Early gigs for instance resulted in as many as 20 versions of 'Repetition,' allowing Smith to describe the different ways in which people are prone to mass hypnosis. Manchester gave Smith plenty to write about, considering everyday life in adjoining Prestwich to be as relevant as any other subject. 'Pay Your Rates' and 'English Scheme' deride the vampirism of the British class system. 'New Face in Hell' tells the story of a wireless enthusiast who discovers government secrets and is then framed for the murder of his neighbour. 'Container Drivers' is Smith's contribution to the trucking genre and 'NWRA' (The North Will Rise Again) describes the U.K. descending into turmoil after a Northern uprising. The song was written in 1981 while race riots against police violence were taking place in London, Liverpool, Southwall and Manchester.

Because Smith's politics are obsequious, it is often difficult to recognize the subject of enunciation in his work, whether as singer, as narrator, or as character. In this regard he also created many alter egos for himself, from hard livers like Fiery Jack and the Hip Priest to the arch pronouncements of goblin king Roman Totale XVII, whose first missive was published in *Zig-Zag* magazine in June 1978:

> Roman Totale XVII was born in a coal shed under the buzz of a defective street lamp. From birth he roamed Britain as a self-proclaimed professor of speed speech. In the summer of 1979 he fled from Lancashire and settled in the Welsh mountains until an encounter with F. Jack forced him into withdrawal from the world. He is the mental manifestation of The Fall camp, and dwells underground while above him trends grind on slowly and sickly.[47]

Like a kind of Tom Waits hobo mixed with the insurgency of Guy Fawkes, Totale stated on the *Dragnet* LP press release: "This is not the spineless usual. It's Original Article. Not romantic not sub-intellectual not 'tough' recycled cabaret glam three-chord big boots." Smith makes his most memorable underground statement with the *Slates* single 'Prole Art Threat,' which describes a working-class pink press conspiracy funded by M19, a Manchester crime mob. The song expresses in cryptic form the impossibility of escaping pauperization. The paranoid and conspiratorial in Smith's lyrics imitate and comment on the sorcery of music and the efforts of capitalism to control it. On *Hex Enduction Hour*, the musical time accelerates and slows down, as though the listener is the hero of a violence and drug-induced nightmare. Smith does not hesitate to assault the listener, calling out on 'The Classical' "hey there fuckface." The hip priest is unappreciated, later treating his congregation on 'Who Makes The Nazis?' as intellectual half-wits, the reason why everything goes wrong.

The theme of sorcery in Smith's work was enhanced by his belief that he had psychic abilities. This gift, or curse, was shared by Kay Carrol, Smith's one-time girlfriend and early Fall manager. Both Carroll and her mother were practicing mediums and attended séances. There are several references to precognition on Fall songs, most notably 'Terry Waite Sez,' which is about the Archbishop of Canterbury's envoy to Lebanon. When Waite was kidnapped in 1986, his brother contacted The Fall's label to see if there might be any clues in the lyrics as to his whereabouts. The song 'Powder Keg' was released just before a Manchester IRA bombing; 'Free Range' discusses trouble in Europe just months before the war in ex-Yugoslavia; 'Guest Informant' discusses Baghdad one year before the Gulf War; and 'Victoria Train Station Massacre,' complete with secret backward messages, was recorded only weeks before a suicide bombing at an Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena, which caused the closure of the Victoria railway station. Brix Smith Start, Smith's first wife and Fall guitarist, believes that Smith had psychic abilities, recounting how while at Disneyland, Mark had warned her not to take a ride from which, shortly afterwards, a woman had fallen to her death. "The ride is evil," he had warned her.[48] The song 'Disney's Dream Debased' was included on the *Wonderful and Frightening World of The Fall* LP. More dramatically, Smith had once damned a journalist with the Curse of The Fall. Two days later the man was in a phone booth that was crushed by a car. Smith sometimes threatens people with either his sorcery or with allusions to connections to the CIA and MI5. According to Smith Start, Mark E. Smith diverted his psychic gifts into his writing. Smith likewise compared writing to psychic work, all of which comes around to the question of aesthetics as a means to either transform the world or keep it at a safe distance.

It is fair to see the work of The Fall as able to scramble registers between lowbrow, middlebrow and highbrow. Like most good artists, Smith was largely indifferent to the institutional mechanisms that keep people and works of art locked into neat categories. As Carroll once put it:

> The Fall are interesting because it's not about music. What was created was atmosphere and tension. You'd go to a gig and it was like the audience had all been in a plane crash and ended up in a field. They had nothing in common whatsoever. Some people loved the music, others the 'Fuck you, arsehole' attitude, others the intelligence. The Fall were and are an enigma.[49]

Alan Wise, a key player at Factory Records and The Hacienda, argued that Smith did not want to be a rock star, but that what he wanted to do was something artistic.[50] This ambition was unleashed in a play Smith wrote based on the book *In God's Name*, which is about corruption in the Vatican and

the mysterious death of Pope John Paul I. Titled *Hey! Luciani*, the play is a non-linear and confusing story with Fall members playing the various roles. According to some interpretations, the use of Fall members in the play alluded to power struggles within the group. Performed five nights in Hammersmith in December 1986, the play included a ballerina, artist Leigh Bowery, Body Map designer dresses covered in skeletons, show tunes by cross-dresser Alana Pillay, and Fall members Brix Smith and Marcia Schofield dressed as Israeli commandos.

Hey! Luciani preceded The Fall's numerous collaborations with Michael Clark, the enfant terrible of the ballet world. After leaving the Royal Ballet and starting his own company, Clark became known for his modernizing techniques, including nudity and dancing to popular music. A Fall fan, Clark interpreted 'Lay Of The Land' on a 1984 episode of BBC2's *Old Grey Whistle Test*. The performance mixed high art, ballet, history, music, performance, surrealism and fashion, and brought The Fall's acid house interpretations to the ballet. After several other collaborations, Clark invited Smith to be his adviser for a ballet commission by the Queen of Holland. Made for the 300 year anniversary of King William of Orange, the ballet 'I Am Curious, Orange,' named after the 1960s Swedish soft porn film *I am Curious, Yellow*, explored the psyche of the Protestant saviour of England through references to national anthems, the atom bomb, Arab states, birth control, deranged inbreeding, football matches, pop music and fast food. Uninterested in the facts of history, Clark and Smith's exploration of politics was a carnivalesque romp, all with the House of Commons as a backdrop. Premiering in June 1988 in Amsterdam, then in Edinburgh and London, the ballet was never presented the same way twice. This collaboration with Clark underscored The Fall's interest in shifting registers between high art and popular culture. Long-time band member and Fall guitarist Craig Scanlon believed that Mark Smith had always been more concerned with art than with pop music. For his part, however, Smith said that he does not believe in the "artist syndrome" and that "it's more important to be a man than it is an *artist*."[51] "I don't think established high art theories apply to The Fall," he argued. "I'd much rather be seen as a failed pop singer, to be honest."[52]

The artistic aspect of The Fall makes its first impression with album art. Smith decided from the start to not place lyrics on the album sleeves since the lyrics are meant to be perceived as music. This idea of lyrics as sound allowed him to ad lib and not consider there to be any official version of any Fall song. Early album covers like *Live At The Witch Trials* (designed by John Godbert), *Dragnet* (by Tina Prior, Smith's future mother-in-law), *Grotesque* (by Suzanne Smith, Smiths's sister) and *Hex Enduction Hour* (by Mark E. Smith) capture the anti-aesthetic of The Fall's pared down music. *Hex*, which was inspired by Wyndham Lewis's cover for *Blast*, was deemed by HMV music stores to be

too unsightly and so the back of the album was shown facing. The cover of *Totale's Turns (It's Now Or Never)* live album was made with a rubber stamp of the band name along with a tour itinerary scrawled in felt-tipped pen. The back cover has a note by Roman Totale: "I don't particularly like the person singing on this LP. That said, I marvel at his guts." The back cover of *Grotesque* included the last testament of Totale, prophesizing a new dark age. The sleeve, costing £300 to produce, turned out to be the most expensive aspect of the entire recording. The sleeve also has a note by Totale's vicious son Joe, who heralds the advent of Country & Northern music. Smith gave personal attention to all the other album covers, regretting only the covers for *The Light User Syndrome* and *Reformation* since they turned out looking like normal and uninspired album covers.

The Fall of course had its musical influences. Smith believed The Fall was the first English group to play rockabilly. Renamed Mancabilly and Country & Northern, Smith said they were aiming for a Johnny Cash and Northern cabaret sound because it is outside the usual rock scene and seeks to interest people through storytelling. Among his influences he listed The Ramones, Patti Smith, Gary Glitter and the Glitterband, Stevie Wonder, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, The Doors, New York Dolls, Iggy Pop & The Stooges, Can, Faust, Lou Reed, Alternative TV, Fear, Panther Burns, The Seeds, The Monks, Third Bardo, The Driving Stupid, trucking songs, Ray Davies, Hank Williams, Link Wray, Nick Cave, Peter Hammill, Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, John Lee Hooker and Lee Scratch Perry. A fan of experimental music, Smith considered himself to be one of the few people to have bought Lou Reed's *Metal Music Machine* and like it.[53] These influences are part of a cast of working-class heroes that Smith opposed to punk. His opinions about other bands was rarely complimentary. He got into Captain Beefheart, he said, because that was what they were selling at Woolworth's at the time. Punk got boring very fast, according to Smith, which is why Friel's krautrock influences had more staying power with the group. Smith's main anti-music tactic, however, was to avoid the musicianship and production values associated with stadium rock. Overall, Smith defined The Fall by what they did not do rather than what they did. "Talking Heads," Smith said, "to me they're the enemy."[54] As he once said to Marc Riley: "That guitar's all wrong! Change the sound! You're all bounce bounce fucking bounce. We're not fucking Simple Minds pop rock bollocks."[55] During a TV appearance on *The Tube* in 1983 Smith is overheard saying: "Fuck that! We're not having dry ice. We're not fucking Meatloaf!"[56] Kate Themen, who played for The Fall for only three gigs, was instructed: "Do not play like Bon Jovi or Radiohead."[57] According to Jim Watts, another short-lived Fall member, Smith made the group listen to a Bob Dylan album with the instructions: "This is what not to do."[58]

It's Work That You Don't Want To Do

Mark E. Smith's attachment to working-class life was not just a matter of posturing or styling. He approached making music and managing the group – a term he prefered to the word band – according to a work ethic that had as its assumption that if you want to make uncommercial music, you have to work harder than most other groups. Writing abrasive, discordant music went along with hiring someone from a housing estate and supplying them with work, much the same as his grandfather, who employed more than eight men at any given time.

> It's like a mentality. It's a work ethic. I'd rather see people working. It's not a socialist ethic or anything like that. There's nothing better than it. There's nothing better than taking somebody off a housing estate and giving him work to do in a group. But now record companies and people, this manager said to me 'go solo.' And you could have seven times more money than what you're earning now. And you've got, you know, everything on a plate. I mean the amount of people, wives, everything, said you get everything on a plate. I'm saying that's not what it's about. You couldn't replace Steve Hanley. A session musician couldn't do that. It sounded like a regular job. I work eighteen hours a day, believe it or not.[59]

Smith said elsewhere:

> I have never held any truck with the notion that rock 'n roll is an easy option for people, because it isn't. Not if it is done correctly. Not if it is done for the right reasons… and the right reasons are to create the kind of music that comes from within, regardless of what the record companies or fad or fashion might dictate. And that is never easy. That is always hard graft and that is what I have always done and have always demanded.[60]

The Fall was not about getting on *Top of the Pops*; it was about hard work, Smith argued, citing Thomas Carlyle's belief that humans exist in order to produce.[61] Among the numerous metaphors used to describe Smith's role as alternately paternal figure, Victorian boss, football coach or dictator, his view was that he trained band members how not to play like other groups and how not to be a musician seeking standard pop music values. Finding musicians as often as not in local pubs, Smith applied his musically untrained "layman's ear" to coax sounds from musicians, very rarely crediting them for any true understanding of the Northern rockabilly he invented. The group co-created

songs, each focused on their assigned parts of the process. Smith would threaten their expulsion from the team if they were caught moonlighting on other music projects. He led the group by the force of his ideas and attitude rather than musical ability. Regardless of how mainstream The Fall had in some ways become, it is fair to understand it as a kind of avant-garde project, or better still a "prole art threat" in a world of attention-seeking and careerism.

One might think that Smith's workerist worldview is expressed formally in The Fall's music, which early on made use of production techniques that most other post-punk groups viewed as outmoded. Critics described their sound as spare, bleak, unmelodic, repetitive and technically raw. Slightly melodic base lines, supported by drumbeat, overlap or interfere with barbed atonal guitar rhythms and unsystematic and plunky keyboard layers. All of this is interlaced with Smith's distinct delivery of lyrics, which is a combination of blurted statement and slightly sung lyrics, with the occasional trademark screech or "uhh" declension. Frank Brunetti in *Rock Australia Magazine* described The Fall experience thusly:

> The Fall onstage are an hour (or so) of kinetic yet static avant-gar(de)age noise: no message or politics, no posturing or posing. Although media attention tends to be focused on Mark E. Smith (because he is the one with the words), it is obvious that the noise of The Fall is a collective one – feverish drumming, gut-wrenching bass, and guitar thrashings. My real hero however is Marc Riley, who moves from the organ where he emits mesmerizingly Cale-esque melodies, to rhythm guitar, to the drum which he batters into insensibility, then back to the organ. […] The thick, hard, dense sound of The Fall guys forms, breaks up and re-forms endlessly.[62]

As early as the first recording in 1977, the support of Carroll gave Smith the lead role in setting the direction of the group. His methods opposed most musicians' sense of perfection by recording only one take on a demo and accepting mistakes. Smith himself wrote songs on a Sony cassette recorder but he just as often invited band members to arrive at rehearsals with song ideas and put them through quality control, as clarinetist Dave Tucker says, like in a production line.[63] Smith's magic formula for bringing everything together was to create tension and disagreement among band members and also to give cryptic and contradictory instructions. His own self-induced punishment was to combine work with intoxication, typically a mix of speed and alcohol. Since Smith was bent on undermining his musicians' egos, they would need to use subterfuge or find ways to work around him undetected in order to get something into a song. This could be more easily

accomplished while Smith was intoxicated. Despite his harsh methods, it is not fair to say that Smith was egomaniacal and band members agree that he was dedicated first of all to the music. As early Fall guitarist Martin Bramah has it: "Mark's fantastic. I've watched him create soundscapes. People assume he's just trying to wreck the amps, but he creates these collages of sound and voice. Mark is a musician who doesn't play an instrument. But he's sharp musically […] Most people in music just pose."[64] According to Smith Start, The Fall sound was a combination of naivete and genius, with lyrics that are practically unintelligible.[65]

The creative process of The Fall also had its destructive aspects. For one, Smith rarely credited songs correctly, leaving people's names off of songs they had developed, and adding the names of other musicians on songs that they had little involvement with. Band members would know what they had been credited with only after the album was published. Smith, however, was credited on every song, as though he had masterminded every effort. Another point of difficulty is Smith's tendency to destroy projects on purpose as a way of self-sabotaging, driving people out of the group or even undermining his own efforts by scrapping something and starting over, creating chaos around him. John Leckie, producer of the album *Bend Sinister*, recalls how he would mix something and Smith would then destroy the mix for no reason. Very often the reason for this was to get on with things without too much fanfare. Being non-commercial meant keeping to a busy schedule of recording and touring, and Smith disliked fussing on something that he believed to be better in its raw state. Describing the recording of 'Free Range,' Dave Bush recalls:

> We tried to record it loads of times but Mark wouldn't let me do it the way I wanted to do it. He wouldn't let us have the click track on and said we couldn't play with sequences. In the end he went: 'Right, I'm going to the fuckin' pub. You've got half an hour. If you don't get it fucking sorted out by then we're not doing the fuckin' song.' He went to the pub and we got it down in one go.[66]

Smith's method was to continually work on new material as a way to keep things interesting. The Fall often rehearsed during live performances and often performed sets on stage months before they would be released as albums. As Smith Start puts it: "With The Fall it was a case of never luxuriating in what you had created; it was always full steam ahead, on to the next thing."[67]

Smith responded to criticism by emphasizing how his role as a good boss is reflected in the fact that he paid group members weekly wages and equal shares. Steady wages, however, might not curb the group's desire for greater success, which kept Smith at loggerheads with their ambition, noting that he

often had to pay band wages by going into personal debt.[68] Responding with acrimony to complaints by his Fall nemesis, Marc Riley, Smith said:

> The problem with Riley was he started questioning all the credits on *Hex* and *Slates* and *Grotesque* and 'Totally Wired.' But if it had been left up to him and Craig Scanlon, *Grotesque* and *Hex* would have sounded like mediocre Buzzcocks LPs. Were they capable of writing something like 'J. Temperance' or 'Hip Priest'? You've got to be joking. Just look at what they've done afterwards. […] The proof is that the songs are always better and different without them. That's what really winds them up. It's always better. […] The bottom line is, I get a third because I wrote the lyrics. I'm happy with that – they're not. It's not about money, it's about bitterness.[69]

Musical decisions were in this way mixed with authority issues. This implied a great deal of turnover in band membership and The Fall had more than a dozen different line-ups in its first five years of existence. The ends justified the means insofar as Smith's artistic vision could be upheld as well as his non-commercial stance. Carroll takes credit for the group's "no sell-out" politics, however: "I brought an ideology to The Fall and Mark carried it on."[70] After Carroll left the group in 1983, Smith made certain that The Fall never had as strong a manager as she had been, overseeing or delegating most operations himself. His management style was the same as his role writing music. He controlled everything, from touring to marketing and publicity, creating tension among staff and discouraging them from having too much fun or illusions of success. Disliking entrepreneurialism and bogus notions of management, Smith tackled problems directly and personally rather than delegating them to others. As he put it about the music business: "it's a job in itself keeping your eye on new knives in your back, on vendettas and vampires from the past. It's a carnival of wolves out there."[71]

The revolving door with band members was similarly expressed in Smith's efforts with some 15 record labels to maintain creativity and control, as demonstrated in his rejection of Martin Hannett's offer to produce the first Fall single by changing its sound. The Fall avoided deals with big name companies. Refusing money advances, they leased the rights to songs for a limited amount of time, after which the rights would return to the group. Their first albums were signed to Miles Copeland's label Step Forward. Seeking full artistic control, Carroll negotiated jurisdiction over the music, choice of producers, studios, vinyl manufacturers, album artwork, posters and newspaper ads. Like Factory Records, Step Forward negotiated a 50/50 deal for *Live At The Witch Trials*, which was recorded in one day and mixed the next. This first album

includes the song 'Music Scene,' which rants against the music industry and features a studio hand giving time announcements while the band carries on to deliver an eight-minute tune. According to Carroll:

> Anyway, you don't sign to a record company, you sign to the whole bureaucracy, to the clerks and PR men who need you to survive. The only thing that matters is the music and these days that's the very thing that's thought of last, even after the fucking sleeves and the colour of the fucking vinyl.[72]

Smith claimed he knew too much about the ways in which record companies mismanage groups and applauded Step Forward for not being so fascinated with the new punk trend to allow The Fall's unique sound to simply exist. *Dragnet*, the group's second album, was recorded in three days, launching it on a tour with Buzzcocks and Iggy Pop.

Never one to stay satisfied, Smith moved over to Geoff Travis' Rough Trade label for the fourth album, *Slates*. Rough Trade's profit sharing 50/50 deal was also oriented towards indie bands and the socialist leanings of the old rockers' label approved of The Fall's working-class profile. *Slates* broke industry standards and defied the chart ratings system by recording six tracks – too few for an LP and too many for a single. The benefit of labels like Step Forward and Rough Trade was that they did not interfere with the music since the money rewards were minimal. While for Carroll signing to any label was a matter of selling out, Smith faulted Rough Trade for not promoting the group enough and sending review copies to only left-wing magazines. Smith railed against their dogmatism and bad taste: "Slates should have been massive! They're just a bunch of commune people who don't get innovation."[73] He was also jealous of the fact that Rough Trade was giving more attention to the tendentious music of Scritti Politti and a group of upstarts known as The Smiths, who, according to rumors, named themselves after The Fall's lead singer. Smith also resented that Morrissey's group had stolen The Fall's soundman, Grant Showbiz. Rough Trade gave The Fall comparatively bad distribution, leading Smith to become wary of the indie label attitude: "It's not in my nature to embrace mediocrity, or defeat even – to be content with a record deal."[74]

The next record, *Hex Enduction Hour*, was signed to the label Kamera and was meant as a "big 'Fuck off' to the music business."[75] Although Smith believed the days of The Fall were numbered, its output was greater than ever. Returning to Rough Trade for *Perverted By*

Language, the group remained disappointed with the lack of better promotion. Their situation improved remarkably with their move to the Motown label Beggars Banquet, run by Martin Mills. Beggars Banquet infused funding into The Fall and their involvement coincided with Smith Start's admission to the group, which gave it a more commercial orientation. Beggars placed ads in the music press and made singles more attractive through marketing gimmickery, moving the group in a more pop direction. *The Wonderful and Frightening World of The Fall* and *This Nation's Saving Grace* achieved chart success, which is ironically reflected in the song 'Spoiled Victorian Child,' which alludes to The Fall giving fans what they want in terms of accessibility. The first Fall videos were also produced, along with modish fashion decisions influenced by Smith Start. Taking advice from the record company, The Fall recorded cover versions of 'There's A Ghost In My House,' a Motown standard, as well as the Kinks song 'Victoria,' which gave the group a taste of success in the pop charts. Smith's reaction to fame, however, was to rush-release material, in part through the creation of a label of his own, Cog Sinister, named after the company that the television cartoon character George Jetson works for, Cogswell Cogs, as well as the psychic notion of precognition. Cog Sinister would finance obscure musicians from the Manchester scene as well as release material from The Fall's back catalogue and live albums. The creation of Cog Sinister coincided with the success of two more Beggars Banquet albums, *The Frenz Experiment* and *I Am Kurious, Oranj*. These albums marked the shift from difficult to listenable music, with accompanying promotional activity and new audiences. Unsatisfied with success, and aware of the coming Madchester storm, Smith left Beggars Banquet and signed on to the major label Fontana/Phonogram, which marked the end of indiedom for The Fall and resulted in three successful albums, *Extricate*, *Shift-Work* and *Code: Selfish*. With songs like 'Popcorn Double Feature,' 'Idiot Joy Showland,' 'Edinburgh Man,' 'The War Against Intelligence,' 'A Lot Of Wind' and 'Birmingham School of Business School,' Smith castigated everything from the music business to the new rave scene and daytime television. However, wanting to monitor the band's progress and measuring every aspect of commercial potential, Phonogram's executives asked Smith for demos. Smith's attitude was that companies should accept what he gave them: "We've given you three fuckin' top 30 LPs in three fuckin' years," he railed, "and this fuckin' kid who's fuckin' just come out of fuckin' business school wants fuckin' demo tapes of The Fall! And he goes, Man, it's the recession, mate."[76]

Phonogram eventually bought The Fall out of its contract, ending the group's experiment with a major label and leading to more of Smith's wild behaviour. Two albums with John Lennard's Permanent Records label saw The Fall heighten and then drop their use of techno sounds. Despite good reviews, problems arose due to overproduction. In 1996 Receiver Records released

three Fall CDs of alternative remixes and live material. The next year, The Fall released six more albums of live material, one of which was mastered from a scratched vinyl. Labels became afraid to take on the group. According to Smith: "And those are the so-called rebellious, hot labels. They're afraid even to sit in the same room with me."[77] He said:

> They'd rather have somebody straight-weird like Ian Brown and Russell Brand; a fellow who can be reined in, given enough coercing. They don't want anybody like me. They don't want the honest stuff – somebody saying I don't want that, I don't want anything to do with that. But I'm incapable of toeing the line. If something is clearly wrong or third-rate I'm not willing to let it go.[78]

As for the perception that the group was flooding the market with lower quality material, Smith replied, "I also look at it the Elvis Presley way: if people can't differentiate the real stuff and the cash-in, that's their lookout."[79] Regardless, Artful Records released *Levitate* in 1997, which was yet another comeback album with favourable critical response, a trend that continued with albums like *Fall Heads Roll*, *Sub-Lingual Tablet* and *New Facts Emerge*, which manifested The Fall's ability to continuously reinvent and surpass itself according to criteria of artistic freshness and incisiveness. Another indication of the staying power of the Fall was the variety and quality of the many other bands they toured with, which includes Siouxie and the Banshees, Mark Perry, Alternative TV, The Cramps, The Clash, Nick Cave and The Birthday Party, U2, The Mission, The Pretenders, OMD, New Order, The Smiths, Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Stereolab, Björk, Echo & The Bunnymen, Iggy Pop & The Stooges, Red Hot Chili Peppers, David Bowie, Pulp, Stiff Little Fingers, Nico, Gang of Four, Human League, The Mekons, Talk Talk, The Pixies, Sonic Youth and Nirvana.

As a work to rule strategy vis-à-vis the culture industry, The Fall never produced anti-art in the sense that I've described it as nomadic, anti-institutional and social movement artivism. Smith perceived romantic outsiderism, whether artistic or political, to be a middle-class art-school attitude. He did not consider The Fall uncommercial and he never feared success. The problem with the music industry was simply that unlike standard blue-collar jobs, you never knew where your wages would be coming from and you had no union protection. It is little wonder that the "new spirit of capitalism" and creative class boosterism harks back to nineteenth-century entrepreneurialism. Yet for Smith, this backdating was not atavistic enough: "The music industry is the most medieval system there is."[80] Smith recognized that an avant-garde critique of this system could not effectively take place inside of it, believing that

front cover exposure on the *New Music Express*, for example, could lead people to think that the group was chasing after glamour. Consequently, most of The Fall's concessions to the mainstream were well-chosen with regard to their aesthetic, including the use of 'Hip Priest' in Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* and three Fall songs in the *Twilight* vampire movie.

Smith recognized the contradiction that the industry requires critiques such as The Fall's in order to renew itself. In this context you have a choice, which he said is borderline criminal: "either you curb your thinking, rein yourself in and buy what they're telling you, or you follow your own path, regardless."[81] This means that industry recognition was approached with a certain indifference. For instance, at a 1998 *NME* award ceremony, Smith was presented with the Godlike Genius prize for unique service to the music industry. Smith took the opportunity to bite the *NME*'s hand by suggesting that the award should go to those who can actually stomach the magazine from cover to cover. He then placed his trophy back on the podium before leaving the stage. Despite the fact that the industry needs challengers, it does not like for artists to know what they want and prefers a business-as-usual atmosphere of equanimity. Smith said:

> It all boils down to an easy fix – straight-jacket your acts, get them to deliver simple sentiments, simple albums, and all of a sudden music's no longer something you carry around in your head but just another piece of TV. I understand that it's always been about money; that's a given. But there's something inhuman about the way in which it's put into practice. And the swiftness of it all! From idealistic punks to moneyed indie chappies.[82]

"I've never played the game like they have," he said about other groups.[83] Smith's sense of autonomy was perhaps best encapsulated with regard to John Peel, the legendary BBC broadcaster who early on championed The Fall and gave them the kind of critical acknowledgement that music press advertisement cannot purchase. The Fall's first of 24 Peel Sessions took place in June 1978. Their first television appearance was on *The Tube* in 1983, which was arranged at the behest of Peel, who agreed to host the show as long as The Fall was featured. This might also have been one way for The Fall to thank Peel, since they later refused appearances on the *The South Bank Show* with Billy Bragg and on *Later With Jools Holland*. Smith both recognized that the Peel Sessions helped the group get exposure but worried about that same exposure, stating at the time of Peel's death that he and the broadcaster always had a strictly professional relationship. For his part, Peel was nothing if not a fan of The Fall, commenting on Smith's reputation as bandleader from hell: "I've

never been in a room that so crackled with malevolence. I mean, we had our backs to the wall at the far end of the room, and were extraordinarily grateful to have done so. I mean there was so much hostility and rancour."[84]

The resulting attitude towards music industry critics and journalists was one of mutual manipulation. Early on Smith complained about the fact that journalists would re-ask questions he had already answered in previous interviews. Although journalists eventually became afraid of his reproaches, they knew he was good for punchy sound bites and took full advantage of The Fall's exploitation-ready capers. Smith derided the inanity of record company executives and publicists, what Bourdieu describes as the executant petty-bourgeois functionaries of the culture industries and what Barbara Ehrenreich refers to as the professional managerial class. Journalists are all too impressed with celebrity and unable to comment with insight. This he believed is because the people in the field are by and large educated but anti-intellectual. "They don't read enough," Smith argues. "It's one long Friday night to them."[85] The song 'C 'n' C-Hassle Schmuk' for instance reproaches that "You wouldn't even know the sun was up unless there was a press release on it." Smith also considered the press to be credulous: "They've got bollocks for brains, and they're lazy. They can't be bothered to verify what's in front of their eyes."[86] An ICA interview with media personality Michael Bracewell in 1994 is famous for Smith requesting to leave after 40 minutes. So is a 1997 interview with the lads' magazine *Loaded*, which Smith took down as fantasy life and birds in hotel rooms.[87]

Attitude, stance and stridency is the definition of survival in the culture industry. What made The Fall different was that the members of the group had on the whole been normal-looking and unpretentious, the antithesis of rock celebrity. Whether this too was a simple stance, studied ordinariness and working-class chic, is anyone's guess. One finds evidence at both ends of the spectrum, from Smith maintaining his everyday garb as means of not being taken by working people in pubs to be a delinquent punk, to Selfridges selling Mark E. Smith jackets for £200. The contradiction of this rebel sell found many expressions, from Steve Hanley making no eye contact with audiences, to Smith singing vitriol with his back turned. In the late 70s many "weekend punks" despised the group's smugness and intellectualism, including one who leapt on stage to punch Smith in the face. This led him to think of rock performance as something like undergoing a witch trial, with himself as both the accused and the grand inquisitor: "How dare you throw cans at us!" he once told his fans. "We see YOU as The Enemy."[88] In the time-honoured tradition of mainstream incomprehension, The Fall were criticized for different reasons: "Intellectuals didn't like us because we weren't, like, college. Longhairs didn't like us 'cos we didn't sound like heavy rock. Punks didn't like us 'cos we didn't have safety pins."[89] The goal was nevertheless to win over audiences, especially unsuspecting working-class audiences, even if that meant putting up with gobs

of spit or thrown beer bottles. But The Fall never backed down from insult. As the live album *Totale's Turns* exclaims: "the difference between you and us is that we have brains." Carroll expressed the same idea of disinterestedness towards audiences that Smith expressed towards Peel: "We expect nothing from our audience, and in the same vein they, if they are a Fall audience, should not expect anything from us."[90]

By the 1980s Smith became convinced that The Fall was the most hated group in all of the U.K. This enhanced his on-stage presence as he would sabotage the set by throwing his mike into the drum kit or shake it like a maraca, throwing keyboards to the ground, messing with amp settings, and similar music-destroying noise experiments. On stage instructions would be shouted at band musicians to either get it together or stop showing off. Smith's animus towards his group became part of the show. He would prefer a few outstanding shows, usually performed in intimate venues over several nights, to that of one huge lacklustre performance in a large auditorium. Denouncing routine as the "enemy of music," Smith would most of the time make the set lists without input from the band and changed the order every night.[91] Most upsetting for fans was the fact that he refused to play favourites from the group's backlog. According to Smith Start, "[i]t was almost like he didn't want us to be good or popular."[92] Regardless, Fall fans exist, from students to hippies, punks, blacks, rockabillies, skinheads and weirdos. Above all, Fall fans are characteristically working-class, with little interest coming from youth subcultures, and garnering the group a reputation that is similar to Bruce Springstein's as one of the "hardest working bands in showbiz."[93] Smith acknowledged that Fall fans "cut right across society," remarking that the only thing they have in common is that "they don't look like they are a Fall fan or anything."[94] Smith liked to distinguish The Fall from The Clash, which he said were obsessed with numbers and treated audiences like cattle, a punk version of The Rolling Stones. Moreover, The Clash he said was selling the idea of England: "They looked like English minstrels. It was just so fucking embarrassing."[95] Smith on the other hand was selling the idea of sorcery, all the way down to preventing the group from keeping pentagrams that a goth fan had given them. Smith Start recounts how he was always worried that people were trying to put a hex on him. After he had shook hands with a fan in a wheelchair at King's Lynn Corn Exchange, Smith began to compulsively wash his hands. According to Hanley, "He washed and washed and washed his hands, but the 'disease' would not come out, so he BIT IT OUT. The black marks on his hand are scabs from trying to bite out the 'disease,' so it can escape."[96]

Don't Cry for Me, Manchester

Aside from playing cat and mouse with the culture industry and with capitalism more generally, which avant-garde artists have been doing since at

least the mid-nineteenth century, what makes The Fall's Mark E. Smith an artist who is best understood according to the Discourse of the Master are the relationships that he created and maintained with the 60 or more musicians who have played alongside him. Regardless of who might be in the line-up, Smith typically opened shows with the salvo, "Good evening, we are The Fall." As The Fall evolved and as Smith emerged as its leader, Fall members, even good ones, dropped like flies. One Fall collaborator was fired for ordering a salad. The random nature of the firings meant that no one could know for sure why it was that Smith thought it was time for a change. Craig Scanlon, The Fall's longtime guitarist, was let go on the pretext of keeping a slovenly appearance. Scanlon believes instead that he could have been let go because Smith was drunk, bored or needed to motivate himself to innovate.[97] Although some have tried to paint Smith as a cult leader, the opposite is the case since such people seek to maintain and increase their ranks. Smith rather compromised retention by berating players during rehearsals, recordings and performances, as well as after performances, reminding musicians that no one in The Fall except himself was unreplaceable. The lengths to which he would be willing to discipline his team is perhaps comparable only to Don Van Vliet, who, during the making of *Trout Mask Replica*, imprisoned his band for several months at gunpoint, preventing contact with the outside world until the album was completed.

What makes Smith a master in the Lacanian sense are not only the pathological aspects of his behaviour, but the paradox of any master as a "castrated father." This Oedipal situation, which hystericizes the people involved, is expressed perfectly in the following account by Smith Start, who despite all of the troubled times she and Smith went through, still considers him her "soul mate":

> At the most powerful times when we were so on point, it was religious. It blew me away. The Fall ran as an autocracy, with Mark as the dictator. When it began in the 1970s it was very much a collective but, by this point – and especially with Kay and Marc ousted – the last remnants of democracy were gone. It was Mark's band. The final word on business and artistic decisions was his. There are good things and bad things about this, but it worked well to have a leader enact a singular vision, someone to edit and coalesce six people's egos and opinions. One of Mark's major talents was to edit the elements together. […] It was clearcut for everybody. Nobody was chained to it. And sometimes it was not pleasant. Mark was the president of the cardboard-box factory, and if you didn't like it, then leave.[98]

In the early days of The Fall, Smith could express his animosity towards people by incorporating criticism of them into his lyrics, as for instance in the case of 'Middle Mass,' which is believed to be a slight on Marc Riley, and '2x4,' about Smith Start's mother and father-in-law. "Everyone was paranoid about having songs written about them," she says. "It was part of his vengeance."[99] In order to keep the group in tune with his artistic intentions, Smith often controlled the activity on the tour bus, making the band listen to Frank Zappa, or making them watch dozens of times over some of his favourite films, such as Mel Brooks' *The Producers*, or Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap*. Smith admited this openly:

> On my tour bus you have to sit and listen to everything I play. You're not allowed to speak. If I can play a cassette or whatever, you sit down, shut up and listen. If you argue, you get kicked out of the bus. I especially like to make a lot of guitarists and drummers listen to stuff like Boney M, because of the discipline of it. And lots of rockabilly. They all laugh and sneer, but they still can't play in time.[100]

Beyond the music itself, Smith eventually overextended the enforcement of his sensibility on those around him. On tour in Australia, and after a gig was finished, he was aghast that his group was seen dancing to The Clash. He proceeded to slap each one of them until Riley knocked him down, after which Smith cried for help: "I'm being attacked!"[101] The randomness of Smith's orders led him to be referred to as God and to Hanley proposing that there were ten Fall commandments:

> I mentally run through the basic doctrines we live under, randomly wondering if there are in fact ten. Thou shalt not dance. Thou shalt not show thou are enjoying thyself. Thou shalt not enjoy thyself either. Thou shalt not become fat. That's four. Thou shalt not be ill. Thou shalt not play too many notes (though too few are encouraged). Thou shalt not employ the use of effects pedals to pervert the natural order of sound. Thou shalt only perform drum rolls in certain circumstances as decreed by the Almighty. That's right. Thou shalt not set thy amp volume above number three if thou are Marc Riley. And number ten … Thou shalt be clean-shaven and stand up straight at all times.[102]

On this last issue the band decided to grow beards in revolt, but at the time these commandments had been established, mid-1980s, Fall shows had

become, as Smith Start puts it, "shambolic," and people had started going to shows to witness fighting onstage. In addition to the commandments, Smith kept a "shit list" and a notebook with ideas for how to humiliate people.

Keyboardist Marcia Schofield eventually made it onto Smith's attack plan. She recounts how he would often either bash her keyboards or make her sing unannounced. She compares being in the group to Smith being the chairman and everyone else his workforce:

> Mark is the definition of a diva. He has to have things exactly as he sees them and he gets absolutely furious if things are not the way he wants them to be. His vision is hard to understand, but it's there and if you are not conforming to it, he'll be merciless, he'll just criticize you, goad you into doing things that you probably didn't think you were capable of doing. He's not a motivator at all; he rules with a reign of terror, he's a dictator. It was like working in an office and having to look busy when the boss was around. The band was always run as a business when he was the boss and he employed the band members. You were a hired hand and worked for Mark E. Smith and you did what he said.[103]

When Schofield, who had dated Smith for a short while, began a relationship with Martin Bramah, Smith decided he wanted the two lovebirds out of the group. After the end of an Australian tour, and before moving on to Japan, the tour manager Trevor Long was obliged to hand them their plane tickets back to the U.K. Expressing a similar view as Schofield's, drummer Karl Burns said the band was like an army unit wherein "Mark's the officer, [Steve's] the sergeant major and us lot are the foot fucking soldiers."[104] Not one to let a good thing go, Smith also smashed the keyboards of Schofield's replacement, Dave Bush, telling him not to worry, "it's only showbiz."[105] Bush, however, holding on to his pentagram, was wont to see such episodes as more comical than tragic. Hanley describes the reason to Smith's madness:

> Mark might be known for messing with amps, so much so that his onstage 'mixing' has become part of the act, but never before has he been possessed to actually destroy anything. He attacks the keys with venom, and with a strength I've not seen in him before. Keys fly about the stage like broken teeth, the audience thinking it's an exciting part of the show. Dave looks like someone just attached his bollocks to a car battery but, given the ethic is to play on regardless, since he's no longer got keyboards he turns his attention to the effects wardrobe to

produce a cacophony of hellish sound effects.[106]

Smith argued that when he hired people he did so with the understanding that they are regular people. Regardless, by the mid-90s Smith had become excessively violent. At a festival in Edinburgh, Smith punched a sound man for eating a sandwich during the set. After he walked off the stage, 800 people demanded a refund and smashed the group's tour bus windows. On a tour in Washington, he got so involved smashing a drum kit that a falling cymbal cut a gash in his leg. When Dave Bush tried to bandage him up, Smith gave him a kick to the head. Bush was eventually replaced with Julia Nagle, who had an affair with Smith while he was still dating Lucy Rimmer. Consumed by alcoholism, Smith around that time insulted a hip hop band who accordingly gave him a thrashing. Afterwards, with his nose punched and teeth missing, Smith walked onto a festival stage with a crowd of 115,000 people. In addition to his own excesses, Smith would throw aftershow tantrums and tell everyone what they had done wrong, that is, if he was not passed out.

Smith reached the limits of his violence around the late 1990s. At Motherwell's in Scotland in October 1996, he threw a mike stand at a monitor man as though it were a harpoon. When Smith Start objected he threw her handbag, spilling its contents across the stage. She then swung her guitar at him, after which Smith called out for the police: "You bitch! You American psycho-bitch! You cunt! You tramp! You fucking shit bag from LA! Get this psycho bitch away from me! Assault! Assault! Call the police! I'm being attacked by a psychotic American bitch!"[107] This would be their next to last collaboration. At a later concert in Worthing, Smith had the impromptu notion that he wanted to play guitar. Hanley found someone to lend them a guitar that had once belonged to Bo Diddley and that had been given to him by B.B. King. As soon as Smith was handed the guitar he threw it across the stage, afterwards handing his mike to the audience. After an off-stage harangue with Hanley, Smith returned only to have his shoelaces tied together by an audience member. When a roadie with a knife came along to cut him free, Smith panicked and swung at him only to fall to the ground. Smith was then carried off the stage. The promoters dropped the group after the gig and the PA company refused to lend them more equipment since they had destroyed on that tour five mic stands, three cordless mics and two amps, not to mention the damage done by fans.

Smith's real decline occurred in the U.S. in 1998. When he attacked Hanley's equipment during a show, Hanley and the rest of the band quit the stage, leaving Smith and Nagle alone to perform 'Everybody But Myself.' The band left town without them, leaving Smith and Nagle to fend for themselves. On their way to the hotel, the two were assaulted at gunpoint, which Smith blamed on the absence of his bandmates. To make matters worse, the band's

equipment was stolen. The big finale came on April 7 at Brownie's. When Smith messed with Burns's drums, Burns leapt over his kit and attacked Smith. The two of them with Haney in the mix fell into the keyboards, leading Smith to then appeal to the audience:

> And this lot are going to beat me up like the big men they are. […] That man is a Scottish man, a fucking animal on drugs and a fucking idiot. […] I've been assaulted in public here by two people or three people, you be witness to this, bear witness, laddies. They're very big. I tell you what, these three. I got a taxi and some fucker pulled a gun out on me, from fucking Pakistan or somewhere. These three fuckers were fucking cowering in the fucking dressing-room – as usual – they're nowhere to be seen.[108]

Smith finished the set with Nagle and then tossed Hanley's bass guitar to the ground like trash, leading to a fight in the dressing room. Later on in the hotel Smith's threatening behaviour managed to get him arrested for third degree assault and harassment charges, with a $1000 bail and eventual orders to undergo alcohol treatment. Although Hanley helped him get out of jail, that was the end of Smith's collaboration with one of two group members that had created the Fall sound and that Smith regretted losing.

Despite these setbacks, Smith cleaned up somewhat and produced three comeback albums: *Marshall Suite* (1999), *The Real New Fall LP* (2003) and *Fall Heads Roll* (2005). With no hard feelings after the New York incident, Nagle held to the view that Smith was a genius who used alcohol to enhance his creativity. Smith was unapologetic for the way he treated band members, explaining that he did not particularly like musicians: "I don't like musicians. They elevate themselves, which is detrimental to the name of The Fall."[109] "I don't have any truck with musicians, at all. I don't like guitarists, I don't like bass players, I don't like drummers, I don't like keyboard players (laughs)."[110] For this reason Smith did not hold auditions but judged people on the kind of person he perceived them to be and preferring someone he thought he could mould to his musical vision. "I don't go through the chords with them," he said. "I just brainwash 'em."[111] A Fall musician had to abandon technical musicianship as well as any fantasy of pop success and become, in short, a normal worker like anyone who is a non-musician. This was Smith's politics and according to this principle he was uncompromising. He believed himself to be a fair master, stating: "I just give them the freedom, which they don't get in, you know, like rock bands and all that."[112] As for those who disappeared, he was unsentimental: "I find it hard to talk enthusiastically about the ex-band members thing. I don't understand the

big deal with it. They came, they saw, they fucked off and now I no longer see them. I find it all very boring, to be honest."[113]

If the Discourse of the Master invariably implies the unconscious as the repressed truth content of mastery, and also produces the frustrated artist-musician as the limit of the function of the Other, then it is fitting that an entire book has been dedicated to Fall casualties: namely, Dave Simpson's *The Fallen: Life In and Out of The Fall*. If anything, band testimonies give evidence of the contrariness of the Oedipal relationship to the totemic father. Riley, who was known for his differences with Smith, claims that playing for The Fall made him better able to express himself. Schofield calls him a magician, bringing people to do their best. John Wolstencroft, who survived 11 years as Fall drummer, says he would have rejoined the group if invited. Tommy Crooks, who like Riley and Wolstencroft was involved in physical fights with Smith, considers having been in The Fall the pinnacle of his career and that he would have dropped everything to play for Smith again. Hanley, who was Smith's longest lasting Fall teammate, worries that Smith's dubious methods changed musicians mostly for the better:

> Some days I think it was great, some days I think why did I ever want to be in it? It's only because it's coloured by the way it ended. It wasn't perfect, it was ups and downs all the time, but it was a good thing for me. Good to be in. It was just the last few years that coloured the good times really. I'd probably do it all again if I could. There was always a distance between the band members and Mark, he was never going to be your close friend if he's your boss as well. He was running The Fall before I joined. And if people didn't like it … well they always seemed to come back. Sad as it sounds, this is always what I didn't want to be, an ex-Fall member. I wanted to see it through to the end. There are millions of ex-Fall members out there; I just didn't want to be another one.[114]

For his part Smith always held his artistic vision up against the expectations of ex-members, noting that none of them, in particular Riley and his band The Creepers, ever achieved anything much outside of The Fall. "It's not as if they've gone on to form a supergroup," he said.[115]

> You've only got to hear people who have been in The Fall when they make their own records … there's like something seriously missing there. And 'It's Mark Smith's Fall, it's his lyrics' – it's not that at all. It's the last thing I think is missing. What is missing is that actual sort of oppression that sort of gives rise to freedom in a funny sort of way.[116]

Smith understood that people thought of him as a dictator, but he also thought that his rejection of the standard ways of doing things in an entrepreneurial capitalist regime led to an experience that liberated people from the atonality of capitalist dross: "[t]hey think I'm a dictator. But after two years they come back and say they never had so much freedom."[117]

Laptop Ignorance

In May 2009, a one-day symposium on The Fall was held at the University of Salford. Smith did not attend but he did send some of his MI5 spies. According to conference organizers and book editors Michael Goddard and Benjamin Halligan, Smith disliked rock hagiography.[118] The first such effort was Simon Ford's 2003 Fall biography, which gives credit to the various magazine articles from which the many citations in the book are derived and which is indispensable as an archival reference. Ford's "linear" account was defied by the next Fall biography, which was written by Mick Middles and co-authored by Smith himself. The fact that Middles' book was written according to Smith's instructions in a literally non-linear narrative and with interludes of creative digression, gives an idea of the extent to which Smith sought to control the Fall image. A few years later Smith wrote his own short book, *Renegade: The Lives and Tales of Mark E. Smith*. Smith's book addresses many of the matters he may have considered hitherto misrepresented. The style and tone of the book, as attested by its cover photograph of Smith pouring himself a single malt whisky, is that it is a genuinely smooth read, delivered in small doses like pub conversation.

I was once told by a world-renowned political artist that working-class politics and the choice to drink beer and whisky in pubs is for people who do not know where they are in terms of the new post-Fordist networked society. In the case of The Fall he is perhaps only half right insofar as The Fall's sound and image are associated with the character of the North England urban environment.[119] Yet, the post-punk fortunes of The Fall always referenced a working class that rejected cultural confinement – an eternal working class that is no less working-class for having lived through an ecstasy-induced trance during the rise of New Labour or in the social media vortex of the Elizabeth May and Jeremy Corbyn days of the Scottish referendum and Brexit. On his last few albums Smith's delivery turned into a fierce growl, an anomaly in a world of relational hipsterdom and networked lickspittle. If Mark E. Smith was both an old left disciplinarian as well as a Lovecraftian psychic, as Owen Hatherley argues, his necromancy of the digital age was no less bleak than his 1977 'Yeah Yeah Industrial Estate.'[120] "I always hated computers," Smith said, "and I will not look at the Internet, not ever. That would be my ultimate nightmare. That's positively evil."[121] "It's the tongue of Satan."[122] Smith gave as examples

of such evil old girlfriends who look him up online, or the history of his whole life posted on the Internet.[123] He claimed to have shut down a load of web sites, especially the kind that chat away about the meaning of Fall lyrics, including one created by a university professor.[124] As a fan of Rod Sterling's *The Twilight Zone*, Smith would no doubt have appreciated the British science fiction television series *Black Mirror*, which precogs the way minds will someday be uploaded to computers before people pass away, their consciousness forever processing and recombining in the clouds.[125] Another episode depicts the day when people will be able to rate social media profiles in such a way as to affect one another's social standing, living situation and employability. The idea of quantifying social interaction is hardly a matter of science fiction, however, as single number scores are already being engineered, for instance, with the Chinese sincerity social score, which cross-references people's financial transactions, health data, driving record and online interactions.[126]

Smith had no mobile phone and criticized Facebook: "I never look at it, you know, I'm disgusted. Half of it is just crap." "I don't want fucking access, can't afford it… That's not British to me."[127] He also had contempt for the vicariousness of living through other people's personal lives. It does not matter what Beyoncé had for breakfast but the Internet will provide this information for you, he complained.[128] One senses that for someone like Smith, the culture of constant monitoring and feedback was not alright unless you could actually get something out of it. As the lyrics in 'Fibre Book Troll' have it, "I want a facebook troll / I will expect the 2.50% of my royalties / And the past is a new future tomorrow / Shut up, shut up!" Recalling the Cold War hippie culture that the post-punk rockers tried to get away from, Smith recalled how the mental hospitals of the time were similar to encounter groups, giving people pills and making them listen to Pink Floyd and Tangerine Dream. Smith said:

> As the world progresses they always crack on that everybody will be more independent, when in fact the opposite has happened. You see adverts for computers talking about how you can chat to somebody's brain. It's impossible. […] [Today] they're all in front of a screen. It's a lot safer now because they can [sit around in circles] from their houses. But it's the same thing. Chat rooms are the new dinner parties. People thinking they're all on the same level – to me it's impossible, as it was then, with the obligatory joint, everybody thinking the same, or thinking they're thinking the same… No independent thought.[129]

Smith disliked reality TV and one could assume reality society. Unlike Greek tragedy and comedy, reality TV does not provide anything much to think about. Life goes by quickly, Smith said. People should give more importance to

their own lives and spend more time on their own ideas a bit more. Smith used old school wisdom to comment on the future of the network society: "people of my dad and grandad's generation at least had an understanding of what it was to exist, to try and do things and not waste time."[130]

CLASS WARGAMES

PRESENTS

GUY DEBORD'S THE GAME OF WAR

"Every worker who participates in a wargame benefits greatly from that traumatic experience, not necessarily because of the answers given by the game, but because of the questions the game raises, the ideas it suggests, the problems it highlights."

Class Wargames is playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* using a replica of his original 1977 design for the board game.

Guy Debord is celebrated as the leader of the **Situationist International** and author of the searing critique of the media-saturated society of consumer capitalism: *The Society of the Spectacle*. What is much less well known is that after the French May '68 Revolution, Debord devoted much of the rest of his life to inventing, refining and promoting what he came to regard as his most important project: *The Game of War*.

Politics is a continuation of war by other means.

The Game of War is a Clausewitz simulator: a Napoleonic-era military strategy game where armies must maintain their communications structure to survive - and where victory is achieved by smashing your opponent's supply network rather than by taking their pieces.

For Debord, *The Game of War* wasn't just a game - it was a guide to how people should live their lives within Fordist society. By playing this Clausewitz simulator, revolutionary activists could learn how to fight and win against the oppressors of spectacular society.

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

AND

Copplestone Castings

REDS v. REDS: A RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR GAME

The Setting

Early September 1918 – somewhere to the east of Kazan. After its rapid advance during the summer, the People's Army of the Socialist Revolutionary dominated Komuch (Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly) is now on the defensive. The middle-aged intellectuals who make up its leadership have little aptitude for military matters, most of its soldiers are reluctant conscripts commanded by monarchist officers and its Czech Legion allies are increasingly unwilling to fight. Things are not looking good.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik forces have been reinforced and then revitalised by the presence of Leon Trotsky himself. Under his direction, the Moscow government's disciplined and motivated army is now poised to advance on Samara, Komuch's capital.

The Game

Komuch units have been asked to hold a small village to cover the retreat of the main army. Czech legionaries will support them – but will not take offensive action and will withdraw if threatened with destruction.

Bolshevik commanders know that a rapid advance will break the will of the People's Army. Hesitation will not be tolerated!

http://www.copplestonecastings.co.uk

http://www.classwargames.net

PLUS

Alex Veness

XENON-EYE: A RADICAL CAMERA FOR RADICAL TIMES

Xenon-Eye is an innovative large-format digital camera: a heavily modified flatbed scanner fused with a traditional bellows camera that creates radical, grotesque images for which the subject has to perform and interact for anything between 10 seconds and 10 minutes to produce a unique xenographic image.

Class Wargames communiqué #5 for the 2008 Autumn Offensive at Cyberfest in St. Petersberg. Courtesy of Class Wargames.

SEVEN

GAMING THE CLASS WAR

Those of us who have contributed to the new science of cybernetics thus stand in a moral position which is, to say the least, not very comfortable. We have contributed to the initiation of a new science which, as I have said, embraces technical developments with great possibilities for good and evil. We can only hand it over into the world that exists about us, and this is the world of Belsen and Hiroshima. They belong to the age, and the most any of us can do by suppression is to put the development of the subject into the hands of the most irresponsible and most venal of our engineers. […] As we have seen, there are those who hope that the good of a better understanding of man and society which is offered by this new field of work may anticipate and outweigh the incidental contribution we are making to the concentration of power (which is always concentrated, by its very conditions of existence, in the hands of the most unscrupulous).
– Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics*

Look, the thing about you Situationists is that you go into a situation and you just leave it, you don't work at it. You put people in a situation and then just piss off with your bloody degrees. […] What's the difference between the Situationists and bloody Prince Charles? You just put people in situations and then bugger off. […] It's go down to fucking 10 Downing Street if you want to do something about it.
– Mark E. Smith

If Mark E. Smith and The Fall allow for a succinct picture of the Master of art *qua* art, Jacques Lacan's Discourse of the Analyst is used in this next case to discuss Guy Debord's 1965 Game of War (*Jeu de la Guerre*) as it has been interpreted and enlisted by the group Class Wargames, a self-defined avant-garde art project and collective that was formed in 2007 and was co-founded by media theorist Richard Barbrook with Fabian Tompsett and Ilze Black. Whereas one has to be Mark E. Smith in order to determine the direction of The Fall, Class Wargames has interpreted their project as a means through which anyone can become a Situationist by playing the Game of War. As an instance of Lacanian ethics, Class Wargames disrupts the comfortable self-image of the activist left by deploying and then resisting the full force of symbolization. Insofar as the Game of War addresses the historicity of the revolutionary tradition, including its successes and failures, my interpretation of Class Wargames in terms of the Discourse of the Analyst undermines the symbolic mandates that sustain the left through the jouissance of activist hysteria. The purpose of this experiment is to understand the Discourse of the Analyst as a control system but also as a means to break with the blackmail of control. Although Class Wargames endeavours to question the tradition of political vanguardism, my argument is that the two contending forces in the Game of War that is enacted by Class Wargames are two factions of the same global petty-bourgeois class, the class of progressive activists who approach the world in terms of the Discourse of the Hysteric, and the virtual class of creative and knowledge workers who approach the world in terms of the technocratic Discourse of the University. The question of vanguardism is kept off of the game table insofar as these two contending tendencies operate a self-reinforcing feedback mechanism that Barbrook, along with co-writer Andy Cameron, have discussed in terms of the "Californian Ideology." My wager is that this group's approach to the Game of War encourages us to understand the game itself as the network and agent of history, or what Barbrook otherwise defines as "cybernetic communism."

How can an avant-garde strategy of the analyst avoid a static image of the game and at the same time confront the Real of struggle. Part of the process is to enter into full transference with the Game of War and its cybernetic logic as a means to uncover how Debord and the Situationists provided in the 1960s an archaeology of the future that is only today encountering its full conceptualization. In contrast to Hal Foster's notion of "deferred action," according to which the postwar neo-avant gardes had finally caught up with their prewar European predecessors, recycled their strategies and critically elaborated them, Class Wargames is not a belated reception of the Game of War, but rather an instance of the core programme of the revolutionary avant garde.[1] As defined by John Roberts, the avant-garde research programme moves away from a discussion of art movements, themes and styles, and focuses instead on the

premises that allow the avant garde to achieve conceptual and social coherence. This in itself is mediated by counter-revolutionary efforts to destroy the avant garde.[2] In terms of Lacan's four discourses, the Analyst's Discourse implies that knowledge, which plays the role of truth as hidden symptom, relates to the Oedipus complex. Lacan writes: "The Oedipus complex plays the role of knowledge with a claim to truth, that is to say knowledge that is located in the figure of the analyst's discourse in the […] site of truth."[3] We might inquire, in this regard, whether socially engaged activist art has successfully evaded or destroyed its avant-garde and vanguard "fathers."

The stakes of this analysis implies that debating the Situationists' Game of War means deliberating on the Situationists as well as Class Wargames, along with cybernetics, gaming and contemporary society. On the one hand, on the side of art, the range of this debate could be defined in terms of what Gregory Sholette discusses as the division between critical artists who reveal the workings of power and those art world institutions that turn autonomous critiques into market value.[4] Artists like W.A.G.E., Occupy Museums, Gulf Labor, Debtfair and MTL, he says, are enabled by capitalist communication networks, even if their adversarial weapons of the weak and organizational structures are stymied by post-Fordist control mechanisms, including managerial assets like data mining, surveillance and flexibilization. On the other hand, beyond the field of engaged art, there is also the site of actually existing warfare. In this case, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Department of Defense consider that future conflicts will involve not only traditional state actors, but transnational networks of sub-state groups, whose definition ranges from terrorists and extremist organizations to protesters and activists. Since artists are embedded in protest groups like OWS, critical artists would therefore represent some of the constituents of this enemy network, as seen from the point of view of "national security." It is accurate, in this respect, to refer to such radical artists and leftist social movement actors as militants and vanguards. One small indication of this are the reprisals against the Disrupt J20 protesters who demonstrated against the inauguration of Donald Trump. Close to 200 of the protesters faced from 10 to 70 years of prison on charges of felony rioting. Although some of the people who were kettled may have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, such as for instance a photojournalist who posted a video of the demonstration on social media, the U.S. Attorney defines all of the individuals who were close to the scene as a dangerous group. The identification of J20 protesters was also facilitated by the cell phone recordings of alt-right counter-demonstrators. The goal of the U.S. military is thus to enable its network of allies against individuals and groups that have been supported by the spread of technologies and information, and who can swiftly organize in order to promote what the state perceives to be violent change.[5] Networks and systems are crucial aspects of contemporary and

future battlefields, with a revolving door between civilian and military sectors. Network culture and the network society are thus inconceivable outside the total planetary system of cyberwar.

Enter Class Wargames. Class Wargames addresses the imbrication of network technologies with war games, a "cybernetic ritualisation of the Cold War" that Barbrook argues is the other side of "cybernetic emancipation."[6] Computer simulated war games have been in operation since the early decades of the Cold War and are used to determine the outcome of war between the world's two major nuclear powers, the United States and Russia. In 1983, the war game Proud Prophet predicted that a limited nuclear strike on the U.S.S.R. would likely lead to more than half of one billion deaths and the total destruction of Europe. Such calculations are not only a thing of the past, however. Think tank strategists, including the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, which includes former C.I.A. and U.S. Army officials, continue to plan for a successful nuclear victory. Although a global apocalypse is an unlikely choice, a limited nuclear exchange with a country like North Korea, they believe, would still leave an inhabitable planet and so nuclear weapons are to these strategists an appropriate response to conventional threats. Trump's speech at the United Nations on September 19, 2017, indicates that U.S. Army generals are "ready, willing and able" to "totally destroy" North Korea and its inhabitants. However, as rogue Trump strategist Stephen Bannon told the *American Prospect* magazine, there is no military solution since North Korea could make use of only conventional weapons to kill as many as 10 million people in Seoul in the first 30 minutes of conflict. Long before Trump came to power, Cold War scenarios predicted that even a limited use of nuclear weapons would lead to full-scale nuclear exchange and the destruction of the planet. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, for instance, calculates that nuclear war would lead to the death of half of the world's population. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation maintains that whatever the initial death toll of a nuclear exchange, radioactive fallout would lead to a new Ice Age, causing most people on the planet to die of starvation within a few years. A single detonation over the East coast of the U.S. would cause the meltdown of every nuclear power plant.

How can playing war games affect this big picture? Class Wargames plays with a twice-sized replica of Debord's 1977 design. Game performances are staged as communal events in cafés and galleries, sometimes attracting as many as 200 or 300 spectator-participants. The Class Wargames event at *Salute 2000* in London, for instance, was experienced by over 5000 onlookers. The project of Class Wargames is described by Barbrook as "ludic subversion," a "theoretical and practical critique" of what Debord analyzed as the society of the spectacle. It blurs gaming and art with science research and military history. Its purpose at the same time is to debate vanguard left politics, to disseminate

Situationist ideas, and to uncover why it is that in his 1989 autobiography, *Panegyric*, Debord considered the Game of War to be his most important contribution. As Debord wrote:

> I have studied the logic of war. Moreover, I have succeeded, a long time ago, in presenting the basics of its movements on a rather simple board game; the forces in contention and the contradictory necessities imposed on the operations of each of the two parties. I have played this game and, in the often difficult conduct of my life, I have utilized lessons from it – I have also set myself rules of the game for this life, and I have followed them. The surprises of the *Kriegspiel* seem inexhaustible; and I fear that this may well be the only one of my works that anyone will dare acknowledge as having some value. On the question of whether I have made good use of such lessons, I will leave it to others to decide.[7]

Through Class Wargames, the legacy of Debord's Game of War, no less than that of the Bolshevik Revolution, is subject to game simulations that propose alternative outcomes and new insights. The Class Wargames project itself has evolved over the years from its first stage as a self-defined avant-garde artwork, to then become a lesson in collective revolutionary leadership, and more recently, a means to teach military skills to leftist activists. In short, the Game of War is approached as a training and propaganda exercise for "the cybernetic communist revolution."[8] The Discourse of the Analyst, however, wishes to uncover the extent to which the game functions as a network and the way that the game modulates the human and the technological. How do network technologies deliver the kind of participatory democracy that is proposed by the concept of cybernetic communism? To what extent is the Game of War, as a model of the network society, embedded in cybercapitalism? We can begin to answer this question by first delving into Situationism and then addressing the specificity of the Class Wargames project.

Situationist Dialectics

Postmodernism developed countless reasons why the avant garde was a failed or outmoded project. Contemporary theories concerning the post-Fordist multitudes and the real subsumption of labour only exacerbate the prospects for a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. One way to adjust the terms of cultural revolution, therefore, is to situate the Game of War within the parameters of the global petty-bourgeois matrix. The Game of War, understood in terms of the Discourse of the Analyst, might thereby yield different questions

and different strategies. As a first stage in this inquiry, it is necessary to distinguish this approach as much as possible from an understanding of the Game of War in the terms of a contemporary anarchist and activist Discourse of the Hysteric. The anarchist left should instead be observed as one of the players of the game rather than an agency that takes an analyst's perspective on the game itself. In order for this to be possible it is necessary to be sensitive to the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics that are essential to the Situationists' approach to cultural revolution. The following addresses theories of the Situationist avant garde and moves from an anarchist tendency and a post-structuralist Situationism towards the more shop-worn dialectical theory of avant-garde overcoming. While this approach cannot provide the final word on the politics of Class Wargames, it can open a perspective on the Game of War as a work that is concerned with its own negation.

When one speaks of the avant garde, and in particular of the Situationist International, it should be clear that one is not concerned with a discussion of contemporary art or of the art world as we know it. Even if they sometimes exhibit in gallery spaces, there is no question then of approaching Class Wargames as contemporary art. In an essay on the "Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen addresses the avant-garde project as being conscious of the need for the destruction of bourgeois capitalism along with its class distinctions, divisions of labour and cultural elitism.[9] Revolution was easier to conceive when avant-garde artists as well as anarchists shared their mission with radical communist movements. Today, avant-gardist activists tend to affiliate themselves with new social and anti-oppression movements, which makes both the critique of capitalist totality as well as the avant-garde project further removed from radical communist praxis.

The Situationist International was a collective of avant-garde artists and intellectuals that splintered from the Lettrist International in 1957. Originally comprised of members from the Lettrists, the Imaginist Bauhaus and Spur (Guy Debord, Michèle Bernstein, Gil Wolman, Asger Jorn, Constant, Guiseppe Pino-Gallizio, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Heimrad Prem and Dieter Kunzelmann), the S.I. confronted in their writings and their activities the question as to whether the avant-garde project could survive the "integrated spectacle" of communist regimes as well the "diffuse spectacle" of western consumer society. Unlike their Surrealist predecessors, the S.I. were from the start estranged from what had become Stalinist communist parties. Nor were they like their American Abstract Expressionist contemporaries who were concerned to produce a new version of high art as a bulwark against both commercialism and propaganda. In advance of New Realism and Pop art, they were also critical of the consumer-oriented production regimes that developed new technologies and standardized mass culture. In order to circumvent cooptation, the S.I. avoided producing works that could be recuperated as art. As Rasmussen

argues, the Situationist project had to plan the disappearance of both art and the avant garde so that the Situationists themselves could embody revolution and prepare the final negation, which is the disappearance of Situationism. This process of self-production and self-negation implies that overcoming the social totality and organizing an alternative reality means that one must first create oneself as an avant garde and then sequester oneself, avoiding contact with capitalist society, so that one can develop the highest possible expression of revolutionary consciousness.[10] Only a competitive and exclusionary break with the existing world as well as with the masses can allow for the eventual dissolution of the avant garde itself.

For Rasmussen, the outsider stance of the S.I. is consistent with Marx's shift after the failure of the 1848 revolution away from the actual working class, which he rejected as petty-bourgeois reformists, towards the notion of the proletariat, a utopian category that could only be understood from the perspective of a future communism that would come into existence after the disappearance of capitalism. Marx's proletariat and the Situationists' theory of the situation are therefore theories of the present as seen from an imagined future.[11] Rasmussen writes:

> Marx strangely negated and affirmed the stupidity of the working class and staged himself as the knowing subject able to not only decipher but also predict the movements of history. He thus moved towards the working class, glorifying the historical role of the proletariat but only after having separated himself from it.[12]

Marx here occupies the position that was discussed earlier as the Lacanian analyst and we could thereby easily confer this stance on the Situationists, who, like Lenin, did not wait for the proletariat to manifest itself but led the revolution in advance of the rest of society and as a means to accelerate the revolutionary process.

Leninism's communist appropriation of the factory system as part of a dialectical overcoming of the capitalist mode of production might have produced a certain working class subjectivity in Russia but not without further alienation. Likewise, the constructed situation that the Situationists would soon engineer produced its own problems as the result of what Rasmussen defines as the totalistic stance of an "all-knowing avant garde."[13] His critique of the Situationists' political vanguardism is echoed by Gavin Grindon's assessment of the S.I. from the point of view of contemporary activism. In his essay on "Fantasies of Participation" in the S.I., Grindon begins with a view of the Situationists in which they seem to act more in accordance with the Discourse of the Master than that of an analyst. His text argues that the S.I.'s constructed

situations had more in common with state control than with social emancipation.[14] Gavin's post-structuralist approach, however, rather than dialectical critique, causes him to be skeptical of the Situationists, perceiving their demand of the impossible as a policing of the possible that casts suspicion on pragmatic agency. Whereas the group could have been involved more effectively with social movements, he argues, they instead dedicated themselves to purging members who did so.

Grindon begins his discussion with the analysis of a series of paintings by Michèle Bernstein, some of which were shown in the S.I. journal issue number 9 of 1964. These paintings combine piled-on impasto with toy soldiers and have titles that allude to imagined victories, such as *Victory of the Paris Commune*, *The Victory of the Bonnot Gang* and *Victory of the Grand Jacquerie, 1358*. Grindon discerns in these works an opposition between representation and agency. The revolutionary romanticism that one can discern in these works represents a kind of "left melancholia" that now shifts to the register of the Discourse of the Hysteric. Grindon argues that in these works, revolutionary victory is a lost object rather than a vision from the future. This brings him to the strategy of the constructed situation. The S.I. define the situation as "a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience of a game of events."[15] The critique of normal behaviour through various kinds of Situationist practices, such as the aimless strolling of the *dérive* or the culture jamming of *détournement*, which the Situationists themselves did not approach as coherent systems, leads Grindon to view the constructed situation as an essentially "vacant category."[16] For Grindon, the people involved in a constructed situation are treated more like an experimental control group than as the self-motivated agents of participatory direct action. Interestingly, this emptiness, which confronts people with the prospect of an action that would change life as we know it, brings us back to the Discourse of the Analyst. Interesting as well for us is the fact that Grindon recognizes this problematic in Guy Debord's graffiti slogan *ne travaillez jamais*, the predecessor of *don't network*.

Because Situationist politics come closest to the position of Cornelius Castoriadis and the group assembled around the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the Situationist approach to labour resembles a council communist refusal of work and transformation of labour into a combination of work and leisure. This labour politics was advanced in the 1960s to counter the growing tendency of capitalist management to control labour through compulsive participation. The S.I. were similarly concerned with the way in which everyday life leads an uneven development, lagging behind the colonization of the everyday by consumerism and the spectacle. Participation in work, in leisure, in urban life, or in any form of capitalized activity, leads to exclusion through a behavioural reversal of instincts and interests. On a mass scale, cybernetic technocracy was

leading society to nuclear catastrophe. Like Lefebvre and Vaneigem, the S.I. perceived cybernetics as a science of domination.[17] Thesis number 42 in Guy Debord's 1967 *Society of the Spectacle* reads:

> The spectacle is the stage at which the commodity has succeeded in *totally* colonizing social life. […] With the "second industrial revolution," alienated consumption has become just as much a duty for the masses as alienated production. The society's *entire sold labour* has become a *total commodity* whose constant turnover must be maintained at all cost. To this end the specialized science of domination is broken down into further specialities such as sociology, applied psychology, cybernetics, and semiology, which oversee the self-regulation of every phase of the process.[18]

In response to a letter from cybernetics specialist Abraham Moles, the Situationists determined that a cybernetic society is one in which participation represents the torturous extraction of labour power, which therefore makes genuine participation impossible.[19]

Grindon argues that despite their suspicion of this new meta-science, the Situationists nevertheless engaged in what he calls "anti-capitalist cybernetics." Neither affirmative, nor liberatory, nor vitalist, the constructed situation could appropriate the methods of Cold War conditioning, containment and brainwashing, which, through forced participation, would create a paradoxical space of either "non-consensual play" or "play with non-consent."[20] One early example of this is Debord's 1952 film, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, in which a blank screen, overlaid with audio stimulus, alternates with a black screen with no sound. The work created a predictable scandal, with audiences reacting violently to the first projection by breaking into fights. A further development of this strategy can be seen at the moment when the S.I. began to exclude members who were loyal to the Gruppe SPUR (the German section) and to the "Nashists" (the Scandinavian section).[21] The S.I. considered conventional art making to be "anti-Situationist" and rejected happenings as artistic spectacle. They also refused to engage in the kind of activism that was practiced by the Dutch Provos, the American Yippies, Black Mask and the English Situationists, whom they derided as young rebels in search of careers and self-expression.[22] In contrast, the S.I. encouraged impractical actions such as the Watts riots and sabotage by workers' councils.

A test case of what the S.I. was willing to produce was a counter-exhibition designed to challenge the Scandinavian section's 1962 exhibition in Odense, Denmark. Titled *Destruktion af RSG-6* (Destruction of RSG-6), this June 1963 provocation, organized in the same city at Galerie EXI, is an early

instance of what has since then been defined as over-identification, subversive affirmation and yes revolution, and which has been written about elsewhere in terms of the Discourse of the Analyst.[23] On the walls in the exhibition space, in addition to Bernstein's victory paintings, were Debord's "Directive" paintings, white paintings with simple slogans like *Dépassement de l'Art* (Overcoming of Art) and *Réalisation de la Philosophie* (Realization of Philosophy). One of the "participatory" pieces was a firing range where one could shoot at images of John F. Kennedy, the Queen of England, the Dutch Foreign Minister, Nikita Khrushchev, Francisco Franco or Konrad Adenauer. Making use of a popular amusement, the Situationists turned the shooting gallery into a dual-purpose attack on art and politics. For Grindon, the art environment allowed participants to more easily accept the gesture of political assassination. The work, however, alludes to the figure of a brainwashed assassin in the 1959 film *The Manchurian Candidate* and so, not unlike Jean-Luc Godard's 1968 film *La Chinoise*, should not be understood as an endorsement of political violence.

Taken at face value, the shooting range makes fun of pseudo-anarchist pablum. The RSG-6 in the title of this counter-exhibition reveals a broader and more reasoned programme of intervention. RSG-6 is the name of a secret British government bunker that had been built in case of a nuclear war and that had been exposed to public scrutiny in 1963 by the anti-war activists Spies for Peace. The fact that the S.I. directly endorsed this activist group's revelation of plans for thermonuclear war contests Grindon's view that the S.I. were not concerned with agency and that their provocations were mostly ironic or representational. For Grindon, the purges in the movement represent the exclusion of "illegitimate bodies" and assert the "total" project of an "undivided phallic body as the summit of history."[24] However, the use of post-structuralist abjection theory in this case obscures more than it elucidates since the S.I. were clearly concerned with the ejection of all of humanity by the cybernetic endgame. To criticize the constructed situation as an act of normalization, as Grindon does, is to reduce the avant garde to a democratic post-politics of inclusion. Situationist avant-gardism calls more for dialectical interpretation than post-structural deconstruction. The reason for this is that a critical dialectical realism, unlike post-structuralism, looks beyond actually existing reality and does not concern itself with what is given, nor with the current interest in Bergsonian and Deleuzian becoming. The avant garde, according to Gene Ray, breaks with capitalist art and so grasps the contradictions of art as a stabilizing factor and a credit to capitalism's self-reproduction.[25] The art system is therefore a sub-system of the capitalist world system. As a whole, the art system converts political art into a means to legitimize class society. Seeking to protect art's emancipatory and utopian impulses, postwar modernists on both the right and the left defended art's autonomy for the sake of human emancipation. Amidst postwar art movements, the Situationists presented an alternative

to control by both consumerism and Socialist Realism. Their method trained people to think both inside and outside of systems, and also to think in terms of systems as such.

According to Ray, we remain blind to the possibility represented by the avant garde when we accept too readily the conclusions drawn by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.[26] Bürger is often cited by those, Ray says, who are glad to pronounce the death of the avant garde. Bürger's theory that the avant-garde sublation of art into life was effected by the culture industry supports the view that there is no alternative to capitalism. The standard position with regard to capitalism is a Fukuyaman end of ideology resignation. For Bürger, the historical avant gardes' rejection of bourgeois aesthetic autonomy allegorized the "work-form" as a supersession of art that refused unity and conciliation, but that resulted in the limited achievement of revolutionizing art. Art can therefore repudiate artistic traditions but art cannot repudiate or escape its status as art.[27] In contemporary political terms, we could extrapolate Bürger's analysis as a means to criticize social democracy and activist art for its reformist rather than revolutionary achievements and ambitions. For Ray, however, Bürger's judgement was premature and failed to address the cultural revolution put forward by the S.I. The Situationists were not artists but rather cultural guerrillas, detached from art institutions as well as political institutions and other vanguard groups. This is where Ray differs from Grindon. The Situationists defined autonomy as a revolutionary process that had the goal of extending autonomy to everyone. In contrast to Bürger's assessment, the Situationists did not think that culture could be completely instrumentalized. In the terms of the analyst, the S.I. understand that there is no big Other. Praxis depends on norms but not on normalization. One can therefore draw one's own conclusions about revolutionary theory and practice as a contribution to collective process, even if one is not or no longer a member of the Situationists.[28]

The purpose of struggle is not theoretical purity and imaginary integrity, but rather the necessity of struggle against alienation. According to Ray, Situationist practice is more autonomist than modernist, as confirmed in Roberts' emphasis on Hegel's ontology of conceptualization as non-identity and adisciplinary self-alienation. Situationists do not defend a normative conception of the autonomous work of art, or even of the collective. If the culture industry reduces activist work to the status of art commodity, art thus "realizes" itself as a prop of class society. The moment of defeat allows the struggle to continue for and against autonomy as part of the revolutionary process.[29] Art that is removed from institutional functions can enhance the realms of everyday life and overcome alienation. The work-form must therefore refuse the existing social totality and thereby become aware of the stakes of the game. Such an avant garde evaluates its actions in terms of a critical dialectical notion

of reality and so requires a notion of truth. Whereas Bürger limits his analysis to conventional artworks and happenings, the S.I. rejected the work-form of art and so, according to Ray, it was not an avant garde in the modernist sense. We can only apply the same reasoning to activisms of various sorts and social movements, even if they themselves do not adopt the language of the avant garde. The Situationists sought the kind of avant-garde autonomy from institutionalized politics that resonates to this day as a critique of the instrumentalized forms of activism that depend on dominant conceptions of power. They did this by putting their own status as a political group into question, proposing that there is no such thing as Situationist art and that anyone who claims to know it excludes themselves from being a Situationist. Revolutionary consciousness is an intuition of the totality and not a style, attitude or delimited set of tactics and strategies. The Situationist Game of War is therefore not only a game but the abolition of the game as human relations trapped by the conditions of the spectacle. The S.I. would very likely reject the impoverished metaphysics of new materialisms and at the same time reject the spiritualization of art as business as usual under capitalism. Only this dual strategy engages in a revolutionary process within the contexts of everyday life.

Cultural theorist Sven Lütticken is perhaps the most lucid interpreter of the Situationist project as a form of anti-anti-art and Discourse of the Analyst. The main concept that he emphasizes is the Hegelian notion of overcoming (*dépassement*), in particular, of specific forms of art, but I would add, of specific forms of politics. What makes *dépassement* an avant-garde strategy rather than a cybernetic post-structuralism is its projection of a space outside of actually existing art and politics. This stance implies experimentation as a means to actualize and realize avant-garde ambitions. As Lütticken puts it nicely, productive forces are as much base as they are superstructure, which today means that culture and knowledge producers are a potentially revolutionary class.[30] Debord's strategy, he argues, was not to abandon his contemporary comrades, but to ignore the small changes taking place that were degrading the traditional role of the working class.

From 1971, just one year before the dissolution of the S.I., Debord associated himself with Gérard Lebovici, the publisher of Champ Libre books, which in 1968 became Éditions Gérard Lebovici. In 1968 Debord began collaborating with Lebovici on the latter's new bookstore and new line of books, which included archaic texts that could possibly be used for radical purposes, including the writings of the military strategist Carl von Clausewitz. Debord's manoeuvres became more purposefully obscure after the defeat of May 68, focusing, as Lütticken puts it, on cognitive and immaterial labour.[31] Lebovici also produced Debord's films through the company Simar Films and eventually opened a cinema, the Studio Cujas in Paris, dedicated almost exclusively to the projection of these films. A quote from Debord's 1978 film *In girum imus*

nocte et consumimur igni, which describes cinema audiences, captures perfectly the conundrum of the Game of War as I understand it:

> The movie-going public, which has never been very bourgeois and which is scarcely any longer working-class, is now recruited almost entirely from a single social stratum, though one that has been considerably enlarged – the stratum or low-level skilled employees in the various 'service' occupations that are so necessary to the present production system: management, control, maintenance, research, teaching, propaganda, entertainment, and pseudocritique. Which suffice to give an idea of what they are. This public that still goes to the movies also, of course, includes the young of the same breed who are merely at the apprenticeship stage for one or another of these functions.[32]

The logic of a Situationist film that operates in an alienated world and that produces "a few truths" for "a few comrades" finds its echo in Class Wargames member Rod Dickinson's statement that the Game of War is really about "the abstract space that is founded on networks […] and information lattices."[33] The salaried employees of Debord's era are today's precariat and cognitariat.

As an archaeology of the future, Debord's film and Game of War are prescient of the networked universe that structures the conflict between the two factions of the global petty bourgeoisie. We can call this match yuppies versus yippies. In 1977, Lütticken informs us, Debord had a small edition of the game produced so that he and his game rival Alice Becker-Ho could appear in *In Girum*. Debord considered around that time that cinema had died and requested that Lebovici focus instead on mass-marketing a version of *Le Jeu de la Guerre*, which Debord had developed in the 1950s and patented in 1965. If cinema had become an enemy territory, no doubt board games were for him no less compromised. Debord nevertheless dedicated himself for a while to marketing his game of military strategy. While Lütticken notes its similarity to the *Kriegespiel* created in the early nineteenth-century, a game for horse and musket warfare, and which allows for an apprehension of all the wars that have occurred since the advent of bourgeois hegemony, he also notes that the game's emphasis on creative involvement is suited for an age of Facebook and Instagram. It is perhaps less its reliance on Clausewitz and military history than this ability to project itself into the future that makes Debord's game a refutation of those who believe that his work on the spectacle is passéist. As Class Wargames has also been more than wise to emphasize, the cybernetics that the Situationists criticized in the 1960s is still with us, whether as economic theory, rational choice theory, behavioural science, information theory, or more to the point, as the air we breathe in a networked world system. The

Game of War is thus like a fish in this water, both a fossilized artefact from the Napoleonic era and a screen memory, bringing to mind awareness of our immersion in the game. To play the Game of War, Lütticken argues, "is to be stuck between historical moments that all seem equally blocked."[34] The analyst as avant garde, then, can be understood as the cause of desire in the form of an obscure epistemological drive.[35] So says Lacan. Yet, paradoxically, what can be known through this discourse is invited to function in the register of truth. The analyst does not specify who or what the big Other is. The Oedipus myth revolves around opposites and in the Game of War we will see that Lacan's mathemes will play themselves out as Hysteric, on the one hand, and University, on the other. Before we come to this, though, Debord's vanguard forces must encounter the contemporary universe of digital gaming.

Game Metaphysics

The science of cybernetics more or less began during World War II as American mathematician Norbert Wiener worked on the predictive capacity of anti-aircraft artillery. For Wiener, the same reasoning that was used for advanced weapons systems could be applied to all areas of science involving matter and energy, from statistics, automation and computation, to biology, medicine, anthropology, psychiatry, ecology, economics, information theory and communications. Wiener pioneered cybernetics as a new meta-science that could cover and combine all areas of human endeavour. Yet, unlike most of his colleagues, Wiener was aware of its potential misuse, in particular, during the Cold War years in which military, government and corporate contractors demonstrated little regard for social and moral considerations. Unlike many of his less scrupulous colleagues, Wiener had both an exceptional ability in scientific research as well as a philosophical and moral compass that compelled him to preserve his independence from political groups and corporate funding.

Steven J. Heims argues that Wiener's lifelong endeavour was flawed from the start, both in terms of Wiener's presuppositions about cybernetic systems and in terms of the eventual uses of cybernetics. Nature, as Wiener understood it, tends towards entropy and disorganization, a theory drawn from the second law of thermodynamics. The function of science, then, is to establish systems that could introduce patterns of order and therefore differentiation. Making life meaningful therefore implies a struggle against nature as entropy. Heims argues that according to Ilya Prigogine, and later on according to chaos theory, natural systems also have a tendency to move away from entropy towards various kinds of systemic order, from complex patterns to stable cycles. Systems, contrary to Wiener's beliefs, are neither inherently destined to organization nor disorganization.[36] Either way, cybernetics is oriented towards outcomes that are potentially already inherent in natural systems. Another problem,

for Wiener, was the distinction between humans and machines, a distinction that cybernetics threatened to erase when it compared the human mind with calculating machines. For the emerging science of cybernetics, human subjectivity, feelings and emotions, were mere patterns in the context of evolution. According to Heims, the fact that human cognition relies on background considerations of culture, society, history and subjectivity has not prevented cybernetics from radically informing all manner of human and machine systems, from cellular biology, medicine, anthropology and psychiatry, to ecology, economics and information theory. Heims echoes Wiener's "Frankenstein" prognostications: "shorn of Weiner's benign social philosophy, what remains of cybernetics can be used within a highly mechanical and dehumanizing, even militaristic, outlook."[37]

Wiener's theory of cybernetics held that both individuals and machines, since they are not isolated systems, control entropy through feedback. Life processes could therefore exist in machines and automata that make new decisions on the basis of past decisions. One of Wiener's interests in the 1950s was the possibility of inventing a machine that could not only play chess, but that like a human player, could benefit from gambits and endgames, and that could adapt to the style of its opponent – in other words, machines that can learn. Such mastery over nature through the invention of machines, Wiener warned, could also become slavery to nature.[38] For him, humans are only ever as free as their machines. Anticipating what we now refer to as the stage of the Anthropocene, Wiener argued that we would need to adapt with dignity to an inevitably doomed planet by learning how to live in the modified environments of our creation. There could be no faith is progress since learning and adaptation moves towards an unknown future. Memory is a feedback mechanism that allows human learning, as a form of cybernetics, to "govern" itself in unknown worlds. Humans, however, and unlike machines, represent a "single run" on a machine program since with living organisms, repetition is impossible.[39] Learning thinks differently backward and forward in time. Feedback, however, is a method of controlling a system and is based largely on past performance and conditioned reflex. Learning occurs when feedback changes the pattern of performance. The goal of cybernetics, among other possibilities, is to invent learning machines that resist entropy and homeostasis. Future machines, Wiener argued, would not only replace human labour, but would also replace human thinking by storing memory. The resulting "chess playing" machine would show statistical preferences for certain behaviours. This could prove disastrous if such machines were used to program war games, for instance, or other human functions. Machines are too crude and too determined to replace human purpose. The real question for Wiener was the extent to which machines would be used by some humans to control others. As an example of this, the theory of games that was developed by John von Neumann

and Oskar Morgenstern for military purposes, has no human sense of tragedy or humility, and is prone to accept machine decisions without concern for policy or principle.[40] Wiener writes:

> Any machine constructed for the purpose of making decisions; if it does not possess the power of learning, will be completely literal-minded. Woe to us if we let it decide our conduct, unless we have previously examined the laws of its actions, and know full well that its conducts will be carried out on principles acceptable to us![41]

In other words, as far as Wiener was concerned, junk in, junk out: machines could never replace human responsibility and so the value of winning a war game would have to correspond to those human values that are used in programming games: "[w]e cannot expect the machine to follow us in those prejudices and emotional compromises by which we enable ourselves to call destruction by the name of victory."[42]

Ever since Wiener established the first phase of the science of control and communication, later waves of cybernetics have attempted to introduce reflexivity and participation into experiments as well as assess complex patterns of evolution in machines that simulate complex systems.[43] These accelerated versions of cybernetics are quixotic at best, evading rather than answering questions of human concern. Such questions have preoccupied critical scholars of contemporary game theory, who in one way or another are sensitive to what Debord, in his discussion of the Game of War, referred to as "the dialectics of conflict," namely, the "simultaneous consideration of contradictory requirements" and the awareness that "there is simply no way of obtaining cast-iron certainty as to what should be done."[44] If Class Wargames represents the closest we can come to uncovering Debord's intentions with the Game of War, then some stages leading to its contemporary significance might include Alexander Galloway's formalist discussion of games as allegories of control, McKenzie Wark's bybrid model of critical gamer praxis and Brian Schrank's synthetic model of advanced avant-garde games. Our use of Lacan's Discourse of the Analyst as a means to develop the understanding of Class Wargames as an instance of anti-anti-art can therefore be advanced through the insights of these theorists of games and game theory.

As a member of the Radical Software Group, media scholar Alexander Galloway has been involved in creating and making available an online computer version of the Game of War.[45] Unlike Class Wargames, who prefer the congenial activity of playing with other people around a board game, Galloway believes that digital videogames are embedded in the network logic of millenary society, or what his book *Gaming* refers to as "algorithmic culture."[46] In

contrast to the stereotype of gamers as passive time-wasters, Galloway emphasizes how the cybernetics of games makes it an inherently active medium for both the machine and the human, who work together in a cybernetic relationship. Videogames are algorithmic machines and cybernetic software systems that rely on rules and code to reach "some sort of goal."[47] According to Galloway, gamic action can be organized according to an axis of operator and machine, and a second axis of diegetic (internal) and nondiegetic (external) operator acts. These four moments of gamic action, as he calls them, involve standard game manipulation, such as moving and firing in a shooter game, as well as "nondiegetic" operator acts, such as pressing the pause button, configuring the menu, cheats, shortcuts and hacks that obviate the game design. Such game operations are both internal and external to the game inasmuch as they allegorize today's algorithmic game information culture.[48] The machine, however, has its own diegetic functions insofar as the game is running smoothly, as well as nondiegetic acts such as game over, network lag, bugs, slowdowns and freezes.

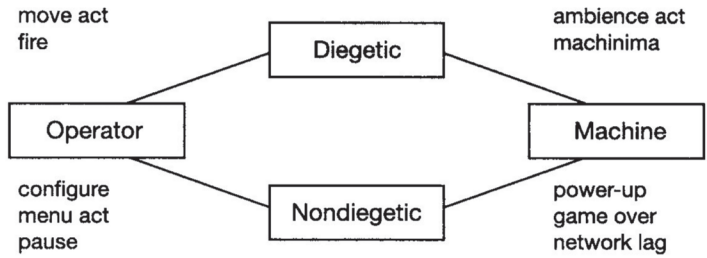


Table from Alexander Galloway's *Gaming*.

Play is embedded in design programs in the form of actions that are imcomplete and non-totalizable since the machine also acts. Examples of the way that gaming influences culture can be see in everything from military training to reality TV. Although games raise social and political issues, Galloway argues that neither games nor game theory are on the order of representation and meaning. Despite the fact that some games have an adequate "congruence" with social reality and achieve a certain social realism through the affect of the gamer, there is no causal relation between the game and reality. The relation is rather between the game and the gamer. The game must therefore resist its material substrate as an algorithmic object. Such algorithms are systems of control, which, like the freeways discussed by Deleuze in his essay on societies of control, multiply the means of control by making them seem like mobility. Control networks are part of a process that today extends from call centres and global health databases to government surveillance and military weapons systems.

Galloway argues that social problems are not solved but rather sublimated by networks. Algorithmic control can be said in this regard to have replaced conspiracy theories as allegories of political power. For him, such systems are relatively immune to traditional ideology critique, such as critiques of imperialism, classism, racism and sexism. Galloway, however, understands ideology only at the level of content. His view is that games must be played and to play means to play according to the code of the game and to know the system. Interpretation is thereby channeled towards the interpretation of the machine's algorithm and protocols, ostensibly supplanting ideology critique with "informatic critique." Ideology, he argues, is undermined by the codes that recode its information lattices.[49] Games are therefore allegories of control, reinforced by the flexible computer language protocols and technical standards that allow for distributed networked communication. Galloway argues that post-Fordist globalization creates a weakening of identity and class patterns. Identity has become a data type and a logic of menu-driven selection that is based in numerical code rather than the kind of memory-driven learning that is idealized by Wiener. Gamic action is therefore co-action with a system that enacts the allegory of control by going along with it, a "polyvalent doing," he says, or better still a schizoid acquiescence to the rules of the game. The deep allegory of class struggle is replaced by the control allegory of information. Although Galloway is optimistic that a new avant garde exists that is involved in counter-gaming design, even this field of "unrealized" action is determined to a certain extent, such that counter-gaming remains within the logic of games and within the horizon of postmodernism.[50]

Galloway's allegory of control gets boosted to the power of metaphysics in McKenzie Wark's *Gamer Theory*, where Galloway's concept of "allegorithm" mutates the real world, such that "gamespace" is now everywhere. Wark's SMS from the edge of games inquires: "Ever get the feeling you're playing some vast and useless game whose goal you don't know and whose rules you can't remember?" "Welcome to gamespace," he says, "the only game in town."[51] We are all gamers in gamespace and the narrow configuration of the game is like Plato's allegory of the cave, not an actual cave, but simply a device with which we are able to fathom our immersion in cyberia. For Wark, class antagonisms have not disappeared from gamespace, they are simply hidden by the agonism of becoming a slave to the system. The winners will be those who have internalized the algorithm. However, Wark's gambit is not to win. His motto comes from Debord, who declared in his 1961 film, *Critique of Separation*, "I have scarcely begun to make you understand that I don't intend to play the game." Wark's exit strategy is gamer theory, which suspends the assumptions of the game just as the Situationists suspended those of art and politics. Game theory mediates games and the surrounding gamespace. The game is not fake or unreal but is another source of information about what is happening. The game

is therefore not simply an allegory of the real world, but an allegory of a world that has been made into a game, each one less perfect and more insidious than the previous. Alas, here too, there is no outside to the game; undecidability can only be resolved by choosing a side and competing. The concept of an allegorithm means that gamespace (life) is now an allegory of the game (game). Exhaustion and the discovery of new instructions at the next level are the ritualistic indexes of the cybernetic conquest of consistency. One must constantly evaluate, interact, calculate, process and network, a "perfect unfreedom," Wark says, and "a consistent set of constraints."[52]

Things get most interesting in Wark's discussion of the game *Deus Ex* (2000) and its first sequel, *Deus Ex: Invisible War* (2003). *Deus Ex* mines the ideology of the once and future military-entertainment complex. In this game, one has to choose between four competing organizations, each of which proposes a different solution for how to live in gamespace.

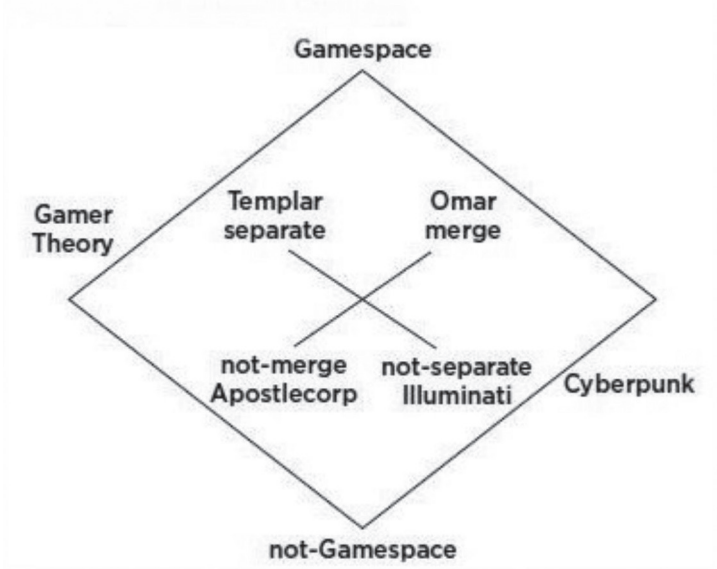


Table from McKenzie Wark's *Gamer Theory*.

The four teams in *Deus Ex* correspond nicely enough to Lacan's four discourses. The Knights Templar are a human order that wishes to purify the soul from "biomods" (nano-augmentation implants). The Templars reject the integration of the body with the machine and constantly question the boundaries of this dualism. Despite their agonism, they exude a sense of alienation. Perhaps this is because the weapons they require implicate them in non-separation from machines. The Discourse of the Templar Analyst is the team chosen by *Don't Network*. Another team, the Omar, is a collective organization of black marketers whose bodies are fully subsumed into technology. The Omar

accept the schizoid condition that comes with the euphoric resignation to the technology that controls everything human. They correspond to the Hysteric who not only is no longer certain what is human but ceases to be concerned with this question. These two groups square off as humans versus technology. Against both of them, the Illuminati is a secret society of power-brokers who are masked by organizational fronts and are dedicated to restoring order by controlling the game. They allude to something beyond the digital but deny access and create paranoid suspicion about their pretence of non-separation. The Illuminati introduce paranoid ideas concerning the military-entertainment complex that seems to control gamespace. They correspond to the Discourse of the Master. Lastly, ApostleCorp is a techno-intellectual faction dedicated to bringing about a democratic but post-human civilization. ApostleCorp create their own rules within technology and point to the digital delirium that Sholette alludes when he describes contemporary art as both the "avant garde and the social realism" of capital.[53] ApostleCorp come closest to Manfredo Tafuri's view that the avant garde empty humanity and weaken individuality, thereby preparing the way for capitalist colonization.[54] The extropianism and good intentions of the ApostleCorp corresponds to the Discourse of the University. The Illuminati and ApostleCorp square off as hierarchy versus horizontality. Playing the game, as I will later explain, corresponds to the Discourse of the Capitalist, and game theory, as Wark defines it, corresponds better to the Discourse of the Analyst than to the Discourse of the University.

Whereas the Templars and the Illuminati designate a space of paranoia, the Omar and ApostleCorp represent the axis of schizophrenia. According to Wark, the Templars and the Omar indicate a further "individual" axis, which psychoanalysis would refer to as drive. The Illuminati and the ApostleCorp are the "collective" axis, which refers to desire. These are perhaps better defined as subjective (agential) and objective (systemic). The two axes together represent in psychoanalytic terms the fantasy of what Wark calls gamespace. For Wark, the end of the game should be taken as its starting point, the exhaustion of the possibilities of the game. This is what Lacan referred to as "the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego's verifications."[55] The goal of Class Wargames, as we will argue, is to mine the limits of the gamespace that is allegorized by *Deus Ex*. Because there is no big Other that gamespace can presuppose, Wark argues that Situationist strategies of overcoming have been outflanked by the constraints of gamespace, as witnessed by the Game of War as an "entombment" of the possibilities of festival. The game rules out what the Situationists proposed as the possibility of living life as a festival.[56] However, the Game of War is implicit in *Deus Ex* insofar as the Templars and the Illuminati battle one another as do labour and capital. Whereas the merger with technology represents biocapitalism, separation from biocapitalism represents revolution. Revolution means that the game does not go on to infinity. In terms of the gamespace of

Don't Network, as I have described it, the Omar and ApostleCorp represent a playing of the game as we know it, whereas the Templars and the Illuminati represent the limits of the game. Between these two only the Templars offer an adequate solution. Wark is aware of the conundrum that for the paranoid everything appears as a fight to the end. The schizoid, in contrast, defuses antagonisms and opens a more positive space of differences, he argues, but this is a space of perverse play with the storyline that demarcates humans (labour) and machines (capital). The problem with the schizoids, according to Wark, is that they take words for things (or in our terminology, they take the imaginary for the symbolic – i.e. fantasy), and the paranoids take things for words (the symbolic for the imaginary – i.e. ideology). What comes after the game, he wonders. Two solutions appear. One, implausible, is that the four teams get together and party! The other, more likely, is that this game is exchanged for the game *Sim Earth*, where simulations of biospheric conditions allegorize total History to the Nth degree.

Perhaps we need more game options. As Wiener put it, "[w]e are not fighting for a definitive victory in the indefinite future." The declaration of human nature against algorithmic exploitation is an insolence to today's prosthetic gods. "Here lies tragedy," wrote Wiener, "but here lies glory too."[57] In *Avant-garde Videogames*, game theorist Brian Schrank argues that the networked form of capitalism precludes some avant-garde tactics but enables others.[58] Schrank's attention to videogames echoes both Galloway and Wark, translating the idea of gamespace into the concept technoculture but maintaining Galloway's emphasis on algorithmic medium-specificity. Schrank's almost exclusive focus on counter-gaming leads to new variables and alternative ways to "play with technoculture." The field of strategies in this case is drawn across formal and political divisions that intersect with radical and complicit possibilities for games.

The level of the formal corresponds to a kind of art for art's sake that is not concerned directly with social issues but rather explores the possibilities of a medium. The political, in contrast, targets social institutions. Schrank cites Bürger's thesis that the avant garde's sublation of art and life has been effectuated by the culture industry. He takes this to argue that we should look for avant-garde developments within these new, if compromised, spaces since "that is where the action is."[59] Culture, he argues, is today mobilized through entertainment and technology rather than the academy and the museum. Avant-garde videogames are neither decoupled from technology, he argues, nor simply melded with it, but allow technoculture the slack it needs to drift into new and unfamiliar worlds.

Schrank's *radical formal* games challenge conventions as to what defines the medium. These games allow us to explore the materiality and sensuality of games. *Radical political* games challenge our sense of play and reflexively remind us of the reality beyond the game, either the reality of the gamer or

of society. *Complicit formal* games do not advance the medium but approach it from the perspective of popular culture, allowing for some possibilities of mischievous irony and parody of the game universe. Lastly, the category *complicit political* is a cluster that Schrank associates with the Situationists and that comprises games that blend art and life, play and reality. The complicit political risks the stability of the world but not without being inviting to gamers. Its purpose is to generate collective utopias and festive anarchy.[60]

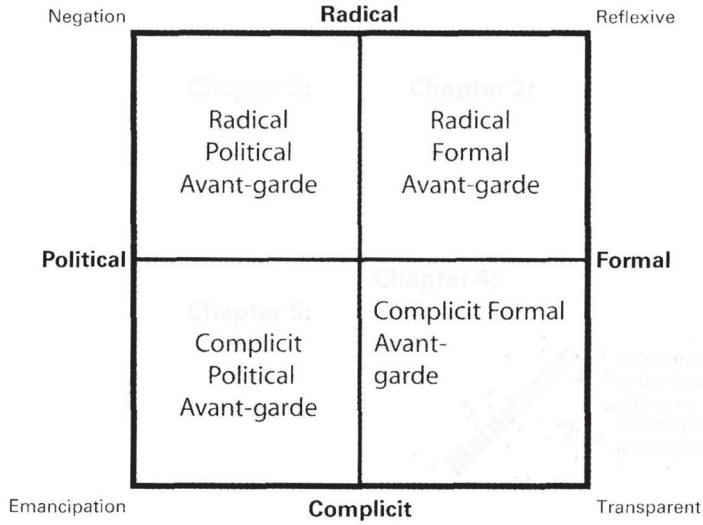


Table from Brian Schrank's *Avant-garde Videogames.*

The complicit political opts for utopian fantasies of perfect governance, but seeks to achieve this through participatory narratives that are scalable across new and old media platforms.[61] Among the examples of complicit political games are alternative reality games (ARGs) that demonstrate how utopias can be rewritten while in play. The practical limits of such games are less important than attempts to make utopia both thinkable and possible. The idea of complicity indicates that avant gardes can risk becoming complicit with markets and institutions. Schrank's approach might in this regard have more in common with Rasmussen's and Grindon's view of the Situationists than Ray's and Lütticken's more radical dialectical critique. The significance of ARGs is that they allow players a sense of ludic struggle in the rethinking of technologies. Two examples from the 1960s that demonstrate this ethics of cooperation are Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalogue* and Buckminster Fuller's 1961 World Game, a football-size "peace game" that like *Sim Earth* involves the entire planet, engaging materials, life-forms, real-time birth and death rates, nature and cultures, famines and wars, food and deforestation. Making the world

more cooperative and more ecological, however, reproduces the paradox that Wark alluded to with his notion of gamespace, which gives technoculture the mission of configuring the entire planetary world system through protocological integration. Despite this, the purpose of the complicit political avant garde is to wrest power from those who compromise infrastructure at the expense of the majority. Schrank comes close here to Paul Mason's idea of a fully simulated global economy that could coordinate new patterns of sustainable social production. Game media could potentially assist a project like Mason's through the development of digital software and hardware, allowing games to enter the stream of life. Despite his acquiescence to culture industry complicity, Schrank addresses the question of avant-garde negation when he concludes that the success of such an avant garde game is its own obsolescence.[62] Class Wargames, in this sense, operates across these divisions, and not unlike Wark's gamer theory, allegorizes the conditions of control in the cybernetic endgame, however, not without proletarian consciousness.

Cybernetic Communism

According to Debord's 1987 preface to the Lebovici edition of the Game of War, his game does not function as a re-enactment of past battles, nor does it simulate real warfare.[63] What it does is emphasize the unpredictable as the main difficulty in the conduct of war. In this it is consistent with the teachings of Clausewitz.[64] The tactical and strategic maneouvres in the Game of War correspond to the type of warfare that existed around the time of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era. The game is played by two armies that seek to destroy their respective rival. The board itself consists of 500 (25 x 20) squares and is divided into North and South territories. The two sides are asymmetrically disposed with mountain ranges, three forts and two arsenals. Each side has 15 fighting units, comprised of infantry and cavalry of varying strengths depending on whether they are on the offensive or the defensive. For each turn, up to five pieces can be moved. Offensive and defensive factors must then be calculated. The purpose of the game is to maintain one's lines of communication with one's arsenals, and alternately, to disrupt the enemy's communications, which is their source of information, munitions and supplies. The strategy is to reduce enemy forces by disrupting its lines of communication and destroying its arsenals. While defence is safer than offence, only offensive maneouvres can achieve victory. First manufactured in 1977 by Éditions Gérard Lebovici, Debord ordered the remaining inventory of his war game to be destroyed in 1991. The French publisher Gallimard published a new edition in 2006 and the Atlas Press published a translation in 2007, which is the year that the Class Wargames project was started. Regardless, even for board game enthusiasts, the Game of War has so far remained a relatively well-kept secret.

One of the main preoccupations of Class Wargames' study and dissemination of the Game of War is the importance of revolutionary history. Among the many promotional tag lines that Class Wargames have concocted for their various events is the injunction: "Play *The Game of War* and you will learn how to fight and win on the political and cultural terrain of the class war." "*The Game of War*," they insist, "is the ludic manifestation of the class struggle."[65] While one might assume that there is an important difference between this board game that is based on the eighteenth-century *kriegspiel* and the allegorithms of videogames, Class Wargames makes no distinction between the historical real and the contemporary virtual. "Play *The Game of War*," they say, "and you will learn how to transform the enclosed lands of spectacular capitalism into the participatory playgrounds of cybernetic communism."[66] They add: "Each side has two arsenals, which serve as the nodal points for a network of lines of communication."[67] As a training exercise in media communism, Class Wargames is therefore concerned to develop strategies and tactics against what Wark refers to as the military-entertainment complex. The upshot for the left is Class Wargames' Situationist critique of Leninism, representative democracy and trade unions. By playing the Game of War, cybernetic communist gamers learn how to be theoreticians of proletarian self-emancipation. "There can be no masters and slaves among comrades," they say.[68] As a lesson in tactics and strategy, it is anti-anti-military in the finest proletarian sense. Leadership and programme are replaced by convivial participatory combat, which encourages gamers to become Situationists in their own right. This leads to the conclusion that for Class Wargames, the game replaces or becomes the network as agent of history. The game itself becomes the leader and the programme, replacing, as they say, Cromwell, Bonaparte, Trotsky, Mao and Che. As with the practice of analysis, the cognitariat analysand's life telescopes an entire history of radical experience through the game-network as symptom:

> The four cavalry units symbolise Lenin's aptly named vanguard party – the new class of warrior intellectuals who were committed to leading the impoverished masses into the hi-tech future. But, the task of North and South in this game is to learn how to make the best use of these elite troops on the social battlefield without becoming Bolsheviks themselves.[69]

Class Wargames champion the Situationists for learning from Bolshevism and creating their own vanguard party. However, this party would eventually negate itself, first as art and then as politics, by refusing to make themselves into the leadership of the insurgents of May 68.

The lines of communication with revolutionary theory, we could say, have been negated by Class Wargames but preserved at a higher stage of the game.

At this later stage, they argue, capitalism has proliferated networks that displace outdated authoritarian modes of organization. However, this shift towards networks has also allowed capitalism to survive. The gamers of class struggle must learn how to prevent dotcom capitalism from thwarting human emancipation. This, they argue, is the purpose of Class Wargames:

> Each player needs to maintain and manipulate a flexible network composed of fixed bases – the arsenals – and mobile communication units – the generals – which activate the various combat units who can only move or fight when linked into this cybernetic system […] As the game progresses, each network has to confront a rival network operating on a similar basis. While the mobile communication units provide a way to construct your own cybernetic system, your combat units can block those of the other players. Likewise you are vulnerable to having your own network disrupted and broken. Each player is the revolutionary proletariat, learning how to build the participatory infrastructure of cybernetic communism. Their opponent represents its evil twin, dotcom capitalism, who contests our class right to determine the next stage of modernity. Learn from Debord, *The Game of War* teaches how to fight and win on the battlefield of the information society.[70]

Networks are a social commons that must be guarded for emancipatory purposes. Class Wargames' version of the Game of War is thus a continuation of class politics by means of participatory networks.

Not all of the insights that can be learned by playing Debord's game were evident to Class Wargames from the outset. Having exhibited since 2007 in such places as the U.K., Poland, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Estonia, Ukraine and Russia, Class Wargames is internationalist in practice and theory, rejecting the competition among cities for creative class capital. This means that Class Wargames could not satisfy itself with being simply a "leftfield artwork."[71] Rather, its mission evolved to challenging other hobbyist wargames and demonstrating the superiority of the Game of War as a "Situationist masterpiece of political propaganda."[72] This then evolved to learning military theory and refighting several different historical conflicts, all of which are subsumed by today's cybernetic battlefield. As Barbrook puts it,

> Our campaign had opened with an attack of aesthetic disruption which was next followed by an audacious assault of political proselytism. For this third stage of our ludic offensive, we would now devote our energies as members of Class Wargames

> to disseminating the skills of revolutionary leadership amongst the masses. Every worker had to know how to defeat the capitalist enemy.[73]

Situating itself in an avant-garde genealogy, from Constructivism to Dada, to Situationism and Fluxus, then to the English section of the S.I., whose Marxism continues to be an affront to the acolytes of punk celebrity, postmodernism and entrepreneurial post-Fordism, Class Wargames diverts the fun ethic of gaming towards educative propaganda for the class struggle.

While Class Wargames argue that the Situationists were too libertarian for 60s Trotskyists and Maoists, and too Marxist for ultra-left anarchists and bohemians, Class Wargames itself is possibly too networked and participatory for the communist and avant garde hypotheses. The stakes of cultural revolution came to a head during the match "Reds versus Reds: A Russian Civil War Game" at the Winter Palace/Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg in November 2008. Class Wargames were concerned that Sergei Eisenstein's 1928 film *October* falsifies the events of 1917 by making the victory of the Bolsheviks seem inevitable and by mythifying Bolshevism as the twentieth-century incarnation of Jacobinism.[74] The issue for them was the residual glamour of Bolshevism for the New Left and for today's recuperators of Situationsm. Barbrook writes:

> In St. Petersburg as in London, a heady fusion of New Left theory had been required to sell the Bolshevik revival to these denizens of bohemia. Within the academy, Toni Negri, Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou were the intellectual gurus of the new iteration of the totalitarian 'Communist hypothesis.' Imitating the pranksters of Pop Situationism, they'd outraged the scholarly guardians of liberal democracy by praising the murderous regimes of Lenin, Stalin and Mao.[75]

Barbrook considers that these three "Bolshevik" theorists had used tactics of punk provocation as well as over-identification strategies to détourn democratic discourse. None of these theorists, however, are retro-avant-gardists like Laibach and Neue Slowenische Kunst, as Barbrook suggests. They are instead criticized by many orthodox leftists as post-Marxist, as the speculative left, or, in the case of Negri, as schizo-anarchists.[76] Without the requisite scholarly demonstration, Barbook accuses Badiou's communist hypothesis of being "totalitarian" – a difficult argument to defend in light of Badiou's intransigence when it comes to his absolute commitment to the disappearance of the state, which is attested by his activism in l'Organisation Politique. Neither Žižek nor Badiou revive Bolshevism – which Barbrook conflates with Stalinism – as a means to challenge neoliberal hegemony. Barbrook cites in support of his

denunciations the following passage from Žižek's book *Revolution at the Gates*: "the authority of the [vanguard] Party is […] a new type of knowledge linked to a [revolutionary] collective political subject."[77] The actual citation, however, is as follows:

> This means that the authority of the Party is not that of a determining positive knowledge, but that of the form of knowledge, of a new type of knowledge linked to a collective political subject. […] Exactly as in Lacan's formula of the discourse of the analyst, what is important about the Party's knowledge is not its content, but the fact that it occupies the place of truth.[78]

Žižek has stated time and again that what should be repeated in Lenin is not the form of the Bolshevik party, but the need to change what is oppressive in any situation. This means that like Lenin, who often cited Napoleon's slogan *on attaque, et puis, on verra* (first we attack, then we see), a revolutionary must act in situations in which it is not certain what the outcome will be.[79] Such non-knowledge is the paradox of the ethics of the human strike in the framework of a Lacanian passage from theoretical to practical anti-humanism: there is no big Other.[80] Žižek's statement concerns the party as analyst, as the subject supposed to know, which means that the party is an external agent that cannot provide the truth to our actions. He adds:

> So the ultimate meaning of Lenin's insistence on this externality is that 'adequate' class-consciousness does not emerge 'spontaneously,' that it does not correspond to a 'spontaneous tendency' of the working class; on the contrary, what is 'spontaneous' is the *misperception* of one's social position, so that 'adequate' class-consciousness has to be fought out through hard work.[81]

What this means, then, and Class Wargames gradually discovered this themselves, is that the Real of class struggle is not embedded in the game itself. In Žižekian terminology, the party as analyst is formally external to the game.[82] Any deterministic conception of cybernetic communism is therefore limited at the outset.

Žižek's analysis of the conundrum of the left is further explained through his endorsement and critique of Fredric Jameson's utopian project of the universal army. If anyone has been playing at being Lenin lately, it might be Jameson with his plan for universal conscription as part of a programme for the socialist reorganization of society.[83] For Jameson, writing in *An American Utopia*, the contemporary imaginary is awash in dystopian projection. What is needed instead is a utopian political programme. Systems have replaced agency, he

argues, and the language of revolution has become archaic. Reformist social democrats have no distinct programme except to save capitalism from self-destruction and environmental catastrophe. Lenin's 1917 plan for a dual power between a provisional government and a network of soviets can be revived today under the new historical conditions in which representative parties are irreparably corrupt. Through the rehabilitation of bureaucracy, socialism could reintroduce the nationalization of finance, banking and energy, tax corporations, redistribute wealth, establish a guaranteed minimum wage, abolish inheritance and tuition, dissolve NATO, introduce the popular control of media, and provide free health care and full employment.[84] Jameson goes further than Mason in suggesting not only a programme but also the social force that could bring this about. Jacobins with laptops and flash crowds are too concerned with a politics of the instant and are too much against constituted forms of power to deal effectively with organization. Unionized labour, on the other hand, has been demobilized by automation and information technology. A dual power, based on an army model similar in its operations to the way in which Cuba is able to mobilize its medical units, points to the possibility of a different system, a universal army as opposed to a new form of government. Instead of the retreat into micro-groups and culture wars, only a conscription and mobilization of the entire population can transcend politics and bring about the withering of the state.

Reflecting on Jameson's utopian poroposal, Žižek emphasizes its endorsement of the state apparatus. The antagonisms of the digital age bring about new hopes but also new forms of alienation. Marx's interest in capitalism's means of technological self-overcoming is for Žižek the limit of capital itself as a destructive process. Against this, collective acts of revolution that seek to affect the socio-economic level appear as totalitarian terror. For this reason Žižek approves of the way that Jameson dismisses not only Stalinist party dictatorship but also the social democratic welfare state. He also approves of Jameson's rejection of libertarian, anti-representational direct democracy – the permanent mobilization and politicization of life that is proposed by anarchism. The universal army, instead, would eliminate the need for permanent engagement, would reduce work to its necessary minimum and would leave people free to do as they wish with their leisure time, which would now be separated from the pressures of capitalist commodification. The multitudes would shift from a mode of antagonism to that of collectively organized work with a surfeit of leisure time. It is Žižek, however, who asks disturbing questions of this neo-Leninist plan, suggesting that the separation of the kingdom of necessity from the kingdom of freedom would inevitably be disturbed by the lack that constitutes the social field, as Jameson also acknowledges. One can neither regulate nor legislate equal access to the realm of enjoyment. Insofar as Jameson rejects the unity of production and pleasure, work and leisure, he asserts a communist

gap between them that capitalism denies. The problem then is the suggested disappearance of politics and antagonism, an impossibility, according to Žižek, that can only be assuaged by dissolving the state into the bureaucracy. Jameson's universal army is for Žižek an ersatz state.[85] Far from rejecting a network-driven post-capitalism, Žižek reminds us of the deadlock of equality as the "immanent contradiction of capitalism" that makes even the smallest of socialist demands seem impossible.[86] The problem of Stalinism, as he sees it, was that it attacked the bureaucracy it had established and kept the state and the communist party at a distance, this being the opposite of Badiou's perception that Stalinism had collapsed the state and the party, leading to the disappearance of the soviets.[87] The problem, either way, is how to rethink communism.

Class Wargames believe that the terms of struggle are the same today as when the Situationists defined them in the late 1950s. However, being neither Washington nor Moscow makes little sense in the context of authoritarian neoliberal biocapitalism. In *The Spectacle of Disintegration*, Wark returns to Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* in order to gauge the shifts that have altered the way in which the spectacle could be neatly divided into two Cold War camps.[88] By 1988, the same year that Claude Lefort diagnosed the failure of May 68, Debord had written his *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* and according to Wark considered that the diffuse spectacle had not simply won out but harboured forms of concentration through the integrated power of a shadow state plutocracy. Wark proposes that state mechanisms can no longer be managed with any pretence to strategic popular interest. The spectacle of disintegration, he argues, is immune to all of the myriad single issue problems we throw at it: "The disintegrating spectacle can countenance the end of everything except the end of itself. It can contemplate with equanimity melting ice sheets, seas of junk, peak oil, but the spectacle itself lives on."[89] Or as Jameson puts it, "[i]t is easier […] to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism: and with that the idea of a revolution overthrowing capitalism seems to have vanished."[90] This is the context in which leftists of diverse persuasions have more in common than they might allow. In any case, what is of interest here is the way in which this process of disintegration is inherent to the Game of War, in particular, as the warring sides are no longer whites and reds, but two factions of the same global petty-bourgeois class. The contradictions of cybernetic communism are what Jameson addresses with his idea of the universal army and what Class Wargames stage through the Game of War.

Totally Wired

In order to develop the Class Wargames concept that the Game of War can be understood as a cybernetic system of rival networks, I draw on a complex history that involves the development of cybernetics, war games and

communications networks. A shorthand version of this narrative is provided by Barbrook's collection of essays in *The Internet Revolution: From Dot-com Capitalism to Cybernetic Communism*.[91] The oldest of these is a 1995 essay that was co-written with ex-Trotskyist Andy Cameron and that expresses frustration with the first manifestations of dotcom neoliberalism. Titled "The Californian Ideology," the text was developed among Internet pioneers in the Hypermedia Research Centre at the University of Westminster who were opposed to the privatization of communications technologies.[92] The Californian Ideology is the product of an amalgam of countercultural bohemians from San Francisco and the high-tech industries of Silicon Valley. A decade after this essay caused a scandal in the tech world, Fred Turner published *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*, a book that substantiates Barbrook and Cameron's claims about how the cybernetic vision that sustained the counterculture in the 1960s eventually provided a social justification for the technological vision of the virtual class, or what Turner refers to as the entrepreneurial ideology of *Wired* magazine, which brought together gurus from the Whole Earth network, global business networks, Internet libertarians, software and hardware manufacturers like Bill Gates, and the anti-government right as represented by people like Newt Gingrich. Turner, however, argues that the *Wired* ethos did not emerge around the new left, as Barbrook and Cameron believe, but around the "New Communalist" factions of the libertarian counterculture – hippies, artists and mystics – that were comparatively apolitical.[93]

The Californian Ideology describes writers, hackers, programmers, artists, capitalists, activists and politicians who associate digital networks with a utopian vision of the future. Like New Age extropians, digital futurists believe that communications networks and information technologies can help evolve the human condition. The liberal countercultural values that gave rise to this ideology combined anti-war, anti-consumerist and anti-oppression politics with a McLuhanist belief that social convergence through electronics and computer technology would overthrow the domination of life by big government and transnational corporations.[94] The Californian Ideology combines libertarian individualism with technological determinism, channeling leftist impulses into economic liberalism. In this sense we could say that the Californian Ideology coincides with the postmodernism that contributed to the decline of the left. The reason that Barbrook and Cameron refer to it as an "ideology" is that its tenets are contradicted by the history of the development of its infrastructure, which relied extensively on state subsidy in cooperation with private enterprise and amateur enthusiasts. The result of the development of technocratic society throughout the decades of the Cold War was such that, as Barbrook argues, the promise of universal emancipation was no longer the purview of political vanguards, but of the knowledge class.[95] Barbrook states

that then as now, the ideology of technological progress takes precedence over rationality and political solidarity. Yet technology is often its own nemesis. He proposes the paradox that "those who forget the future are condemned to repeat it."[96] The disappearance of the imaginary future of communism has made it such that we have allowed corporate and government elites to transform the cybernetic revolution into a networked system of control.[97] The Net becomes both the image of the future and the vanguard. Its politics is social domination through the anonymous powers of economics, technology and ideology. Deregulation and free enterprise are the system requirements proposed by what Turner calls the "*Wired* ideology." By making high-tech into the agent of history, neoliberals have produced strange bedfellows among the new left, who now prefer temporary ad hoc assemblages to that of class struggle through organized and disciplined political party bureaucracies.[98] According to Barbrook and Cameron, the result is the entrenchment of class conflict: "instead of predicting the emancipation of humanity, this form of technological determinism can only envisage a deepening of social segregation."[99]

Driven by technological determinism, the quest today on both the left and the right is for more technological and design solutions as means to disavow problems of political consciousness and mobilization. From artificial intelligence to theories of a post-human collective intelligence, pessimistic visions of politics are exchanged for the futurology of the virtual class. But the pathogenic condition of the virtual class, Franco Berardi argues, destroys social resources and intellectual skills by enforcing the war machine of the semiotized economy – what he elsewhere refers to as finazism.[100] Class Wargames represents a do-it-yourself intervention in this process as it stages the conflict between the virtual class of knowledge workers and those who wish to shape the digital future through either state intervention or grassroots mobilization.

Around the time of the dotcom crash, Barbrook took another dig at the Californian Ideology by writing a "McLuhan thought probe" for a lecture at Fordham University.[101] Titled "Cyber-Communism: How the Americans Are Superseding Capitalism in Cyberspace," this 1999 text made the now familiar argument that by unleashing the technological revolution, neoliberal capitalism had unwittingly developed a working model for a post-capitalist future. Anticipating Negri's autonomist optimism and Mason's quasi-accelerationist platform, Barbrook argued that dotcom capitalism is building the infrastructures of cybernetic communism. The gift economy and its new modes of cooperative production, open source peer production, user-generated content, creative commons and zero marginal cost production, have created abundance rather than the scarcity required for capitalist profit. While the "Internet of Things" allows for unprecedented advances in the mode of production, all that is now missing is worker self-management.[102] Communism therefore exists in

technology but not in social relations, nor at the level of ideology. The subject of history is thus defined by and reduced to the logic of networks.

In the context of network ideology, the Game of War becomes useful by teaching how it is that history is full of unexpected reversals. Dotcom capitalism could, through class struggle, be transformed into cyber-communism. Now that millions of people have access to the Internet, new vanguards will appear as agents of change who will shape technology to serve human needs and human civilization. Who are these people? Barbrook is optimistic about the class of workers that Debord was much more skeptical of when he described the cinema audience. Here is Barbrook's version:

> The intermediary [petty-bourgeois] layer is the vanguard of modernity. Faithful to this role, digital artisans are making many technological and aesthetic advances. Despite having to sell their creativity, their ways of working are often egalitarian and collaborative. Once again, the intermediary layer is inventing the future.[103]

In his 2015 reassessment of both "The Californian Ideology" and "Cyber-Communism," Barbrook acknowledges that it is the Californian Ideology that has so far won the class war game since the Net has now been virtually colonized by corporations. The Californian Ideology is today a widespread belief system. The question remains, however, if Marx and Engels' philosophical model from *The German Ideology*, which argues that material conditions shape consciousness, is adequate to understanding the role of the vanguard. In other words, is a more egalitarian political economy the solution to the Californian Ideology? Žižek's theory of ideology, in contrast, argues against the notion of false consciousness and holds instead that the void of subjectivity makes it such that the Real of class struggle cannot be integrated into the existing symbolic order and therefore into subjective reality. Ideology corresponds rather to unconscious fantasy, which is why Class Wargames' Game of War, as a staging of the imbrication of the masses into the cybernetic system, functions perfectly as a session of transference through which the virtual class has a means to come to consciousness, as we have argued, regarding the Oedipal desire to have finished with vanguards. In the Discourse of the Master, the structure of fantasy is subsumed and has no support in the symbolic order. As Lacan writes, "the master's discourse excludes fantasy."[104] Only the Discourse of the Analyst takes fantasy seriously as a reversed order of truth. In Lacanian terms, however, to identify the avant garde as the father figure in the Oedipal relation is to shift from the Discourse of the Analyst to the University Discourse and thereby to make class struggle into another myth: i.e. into the "ideology" of cybernetic communism. The vanguard party leadership cannot give the masses the rule

of what is to be done. The masses can only exit transference themselves and decide when the game will be over. Game Over Mubarak was a widely disseminated meme in February of 2011. Six years later the oligarch has been cleared of responsibility for the deaths of 800 demonstrators and after the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood the regime of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has incarcerated more than 60,000 people and sentenced more than 1000 political opponents to execution. The living conditions in Egypt and in many parts of the world today are similar to those of Tsarist Russia. The paradox of truth is that it hides castration. What can the Game of War, as a self-contradictory half-truth, do to either end war or spark the class war? The latent content of the analyst's discourse is this master signifier around which a new vanguard is possible.

I'm Not a Robot

Is it possible to alter gamespace without playing the cybernetic game? This is the enigma of Debord's graffiti injunction to never work, which we have adapted to the age of the social factory. Can we refuse the blackmail of cyberpower? The Discourse of the Analyst shows us the impasse of our situation, our symbolic castration, but does not as such possess the solution to the Game of War. It only proposes an analysis of the game we are playing, our fundamental fantasy. The level of Situationist consciousness proposed by Class Wargames cannot be accessed through the game of art as a space of formal autonomy, but only as a "political" avant-garde game whose stakes are a critique of the Discourse of the University and Discourse of the Hysteric. The game is "complicit" in the sense of ludic participation, but "radical" in the sense that it questions the threat of digitization as a feature of speculative capital. This stance of engaged praxis provides further awareness of how the allegorithms of technoculture fail to resolve the contradictions of what Lacan referred to as the Discourse of the Capitalist. As a means to test the level of self-awareness of gamers, Hito Steyerl agrees with the above-mentioned theorists that videogames are not simple distortions of reality. In her essay "On Games," she addresses the question of whether or not it is possible to know the difference between humans and robots.[105] Referring to Alan Turing's imitation games, which apply probability calculations to reality, as well as von Neumann and Morgenstern's mathematical games theories, computers are said to exhibit human traits when they can successfully be mistaken for human beings. In an update of the myth of Zeuxis and Praxiteles, the test of deception allegorizes a relationship of competition and domination. Consequently, zero-sum games have been used for military war games as well as neoliberal economic policies. When changing the world is too difficult, Steyerl argues, games have been introduced that can change the world according to its generative fictions. For instance, if the free market does not behave like a rational actor, you invent a

computer that simulates a rational free market as a generative fiction.[106] Steyerl endorses Wark's notion that today we all of us live in gamespace.

In the first Turing imitation tests, people had to guess if an unseen interlocutor was human or non-human. In today's networked digital realms, however, humans are often required to prove to computers that they are not themselves computer algorithms, as for instance with the CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) test in which one has to decipher and transcribe a squiggly text or check a box that states "I am not a robot." With the more advanced computer monitoring systems that are now for instance used by Google, a user's identity becomes "correlated" with their online behaviour. Your data speaks for you, replacing your imitation of a human for a machine with an identification of what you are through network analysis. For instance, your Facebook feed provides Google with the correlate of your identity. Confusing math and computation for truth becomes critical when games that cannot be turned off transgress their boundaries and become real. The algorithms that today calculate academic ranking scores, reputation scores, risk analysis, economic investment, and so on, are social abstractions in which models are taken for reality. Such automata can only be challenged by gamers, she argues, who risk their own generative fictions, however unrealistic, when taking gamespace for real. She writes: "You will have to imitate a not yet existent reality and game it into being. This is how playing grows into acting. Now, creatives, please start thinking about it."[107]

The notion of generative fictions is nothing new. Bourdieu's sociology of culture was already, since the late 1970s, an advance on formalist hermeneutics in its critique of the notion that formal properties were the equivalent of relationality. Bourdieu's model was non-reductionist in the extreme, explaining how symbolic power was not reducible to political economy, and therefore how culture could all the more serve legitimating functions and contribute to the reproduction of class inequality.[108] The question of what constitutes a work of art, and moreover the value of a work such as a videogame, is implicated in relations of conflict. One might further reflect on the conflict that Steyerl stages between humans and machines, as seen for instance in the lecture version of her paper "On Games" that she delivered at the Antoni Tàpies Foundation in June of 2016.[109] Steyerl is seen wearing what looks like a Turkish headscarf. This is not a merely incidental fashion decision since she mentions in her presentation Walter Benjamin's discussion of the "Chess Turk," a dwarf who hides under a chess board and passes itself off as an Ottoman automaton who defeats his opponents at chess. This scenario, interestingly, is the motif of Žižek's 2003 book, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*. Žižek begins his book with the first of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," which reads:

> The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answers each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.[110]

For Žižek, theology has not disappeared entirely but has been given a new post-secular mission through deconstruction. It is rather historical materialism that is today made to disappear. Either way, it is in modernity in which religion acquires an independence and autonomy from the broader culture. One could say the same thing for other superstructures such as art and political theory. Art survives in today's network society as technology games, which enables art to generalize itself but which also gets reduced to secondary phenomena of the social totality, much like the activism of socially engaged artists, which contends with the legitimating economic functions of the creative industries. To paraphrase Žižek's thoughts on religion inside this framework of "downward synthesis," both games and social practice attempt to assert themselves as critical agency or as means to function more effectively in the existing order.[111] The reason why we cannot simply do without art and videogames is because they cannot be replaced by an algorithmic technoculture that has no moral or social values. However, at the same time, art and games do not by themselves fulfill this task. Here Žižek cites Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, which argue that in the modern age art no longer has the singular power to induce belief. Žižek cites Hegel, whose words bring the question of art and videogames back to our discussion of the avant garde: "It is a modern folly to alter a corrupt ethical system, its constitution and legislation, without changing the religion, to have a revolution without a reformation."[112] This higher level of awareness, Žižek says, announces the necessity of cultural revolution as a condition for social change. Today, he argues, we have the technological revolution without the revolution of everyday life. Theory thus brings us to the understanding that the subversive potential of art and videogames is accessible only to dialectical materialism and vice versa.

As we have argued with regard to the Game of War, the question concerning the dialectical materialist critique of capitalism cannot be directly addressed outside the context of the military-entertainment complex. Although

outdated in terms of advances in high-tech weaponry, Manuel DeLanda's 1991 text, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, has many of the elements required to understand the links between network technology, Class Wargames and the social factory. DeLanda refers to Deleuze's concept of a "machinic phylum" in order to assess how the war games of the military-entertainment complex show signs of artificial and robot intelligence. There are two contervailing and contradictory forces at play in war games, he argues. One is the predatory role of war games and the propensity to eliminate human intelligence, and the other is the opposite tendency of human players to avoid crossing the nuclear threshold into "mutually assured destruction" (MAD) or, more recently, into "nuclear utilization target selection" (NUTS).[113] The distinction between advisory and executive roles for intelligent machines in the context of military policy is gradually blurring in favour of ever "smarter" machines and artificial intelligence (AI). A history of this "machinic phylum" traces the self-organizing and cooperative processes that take place at a level above and beneath human history, whether we are talking about atomic and molecular organization, economic turbulence or network connectivity. The question of "robot consciousness" appears as a matter of assemblages that are neither individual nor collective but simply technological. The critical transition points of assemblage see the phylum mutate into new singularities, phases and patterns, which have altered over the years into new forms of warfare. For our purposes, we could say that what DeLanda defines as the level of *weapons* corresponds to the nuts and bolts version of networks as systems of nodes and links. The level of *tactics* refers to Class Wargames' Situationist training as the art of assembling humans and weapons on a simulated battlefield. The higher level of *strategy* brings us back to networks but we can appreciate it more specifically this time as the capitalized, business ontology of network society. Understood in these terms, it is easy enough to see the highest level, that of *logistics*, as the reality of social factory cyberpower and the art of permanent military activity in the gamespace of the military-entertainment complex – an annual multi-trillion dollar global societal enterprise. The question for Class Wargames, as for other critics of the network society, is whether the social factory can be turned into a world of cybernetic communism. The upshot is the extent to which capitalism is able to reproduce itself in these new conditions of the machinic phylum, and secondly, whether or not humanity will annihilate itself as it ponders this enigma, or, more indirectly, whether the self-oganizing processes of artificial intelligence, particularly as they are applied to war games, will annihilate humanity on its behalf.

The first and most basic level of the military-entertainment complex is that of weapons hardware. At the level of propulsion, the nineteenth-century mass production of infantry rifles by military engineers led to a rationalization of the labour process wherein rifles could share interchangeable parts. The command

structure of the military, DeLanda argues, was extended to the civilian sector in the form of "scientific management," which emphasized uniformity in procurement, supply and repair of industrial products.[114] The orchestration of uniformity emphasized the division of labour as well as management monitoring and quality control through, in the case of the U.S. military, the Corps of Engineers. This extended to the supervision of railroad networks, controlling the flow of goods and knowledge at ever new scales of complexity. The thrust of uniformity was to replace human artisanal skill with procedures that extend command structure across the apparatus of production. The body of the artisan was further integrated with machines through the development of Taylorism. By the 1950s, numerical control (NC) introduced mathematical information into the automatic machining of complex weapons systems. Management was further extended through computer links that discipline workers. The dream of a totally computer-controlled factory has meant that the military typically views man-machine interfaces as threats to its control of logistics. Rather than tactical and strategic decisions, the ability of a nation to win a war has depended in the twentieth century on its ability to mobilize its entire industrial might. Within Cold War logic, the connection of scientific with military research advanced the speed of weapons with regard to the pace of world events, creating its own dynamic of acceleration and simulation of the vast war machine through war games. As with Wiener's anti-aircraft systems, simulation-based war games are oriented around predation and therefore the predictive capacity of feedback-based servomechanisms. The kind of smart weaponry used in cruise missiles as well as today's drone technology have enough intelligence to lock onto targets automatically, further removing human performance from the loop of predation. The main task of human beings in today's weapons systems is to decide if other humans are friends or enemies. As we increasingly see with government kill lists and air strikes that target civilians, defence strategy is defined in terms of offensive techniques that stimulate the self-sustaining feedback loops of arms races. Through radar and satellite technology, and today through digital networks, the entire surface of the globe is a theatre of war. Social life is today networked into the command, control and communications (C^3) infrastructure of the military-entertainment complex.

The next level in the machinic phylum is that of tactics. Class Wargames seek to act in this regard as our partisan network's Chiefs of Staff. Tactics shift from the question of weapons to that of combining human software with weapons hardware. One has to engage with the Game of War in order to be a player in this simulated war game. The question of cooperation and coordination has been at the heart of military formations since fifteenth-century commanders used drill and rhythmic movements to instill an *esprit de corps* and to integrate humans into battle formations. According to DeLanda, drills produce "entrainment," which implies both learning and unit cohesion.[115] The purpose of

entrainment is to guarantee the continuity of military command within a war machine. Cooperation in a war is never, as Class Wargames argues, a matter of spontaneous cooperation and decentralized participation. Cooperation emerges through conflicts, turbulence, migrations or invasions and in such situations human beings become, like the weapons they carry, interchangeable. In terms of command structure, this is especially true of officer ranks. When a soldier steps out of line, he or she must be either demoted or promoted into their proper rank category. A tactical unit is an information-processing machine whose purpose it is to transmit and execute commands, with feedback running from top to bottom and back up the chain of command. A unit, DeLanda says, must be part of an effective C^3 network and must self-organize in the midst of battle so as to not create uncertainty.

The preference for centralized versus decentralized command structures has changed in the course of technological development, a shift that DeLanda associates with the progression from "clockwork" formations to "motor" and "network" paradigms. For instance, the clockwork mechanisms of the armies of Frederick the Great involved "robot" soldiers who were drilled to interface seamlessly with their muskets. Hierarchical command combined with rigid squares of fighting men who had little individual initiative and responded to a limited repertoire of simple actions. This was the apex of the phalanx structure that reaches back to ancient Greece. Drills, however, could not instill loyalty and desertion remained a problem until the Napoleonic armies introduced the notion of popular sovereignty. Moreover, the French armies of the early nineteenth century were "motor" armies that could break down into self-contained divisions and divide into multipurpose and flexible maneouvres that were guided by commanders on the battlefield. This more decentralized structure, however, increased the amount of information travelling through the command structure and therefore increased uncertainty. The rise of a "general staff" that could handle the mess of information was accompanied by the increase in scouting and reconnaissance, all of which developed into today's "distributed networks." The latter phase emerges with the German *Blitzkrieg* of WWII, wherein tight formations are exchanged for skirmishes of small groups who through command and mutual communication can disassemble and coalesce. The German storm trooper was an efficient, obedient and versatile soldier who was coupled with machine guns and flamethrowers, and who could command other soldiers who assembled into platoons that integrated targeted attacks with artillery and air support. Two-way radio communication was the new means of conquest in the networked mode of warfare. A wireless nervous system connected soldiers whose target was not only particular nodes in an enemy network but the morale of the enemy's leadership. The radio-based chain of distributed command resulted in a new man-machine assemblage whose networked nodes allowed for local initiative.

The WWII platoon thus corresponds to what today's networked social movement collectives prefer as the small worlds theory. In social movement politics as in military tactics, the organized chaos of protest dissipates uncertainty through tactical intelligence, relying on the morale and skill of individual soldiers. The paradox of this development of cybernetic technology is that is also allows human decision-making to be taken out of the loop. As computers evolve, so do world-wide networks of command and control. Nuclear war, for example, requires a unified control system in which certainty is modulated by the increased flow of information. Rather than taking people out of the loop, the challenge of a distributed network tactic is to combine people into synergistic units.[116] Following this, the purpose of AI is to introduce expert know-how into systems technology. Leaders today are those who manage the flow of information. The real question for today's battlefield is not whether to disperse decision-making, as Class Wargames proposes, but whether or not to allow computer algorithms to make executive decisions. The new spirit of capitalism in the military-entertainment complex is a progressive overcentralization that disperses the fog of war. This represents since at least WWII a clear and present danger. DeLanda writes: "In the age of nuclear weapons we cannot afford to let the war machines self-destruct for they would take us all with them in the process."[117] The paradox is that the ant-like busyness of the multitude advances the forward march of AI.

The situation reaches the level of dialectical complexity only at the stage of strategy. Today's vanguards can only be relatively concerned with DeLanda's Deleuzian logic of the self-organizing machinic phylum. The issue for us in terms of a Discourse of the Analyst is the question of transference as opposed to assemblage. The networked society of post-Fordism assembles counter-games into a relatively coherent picture of networked resistance, as seen for instance in the case of Occupy Wall Street. The question that strategy asks is why play the game of war? By choosing the Knights Templar as our allegorithmic home team, we have instituted an anti-system element that challenges on a strategic level our immersion into the military-entertainment complex. The function of strategy, according to DeLanda, is to integrate battles (or war games) together in order to win entire wars. According to Clausewitz, the question of how to win a battle is a matter of tactics. The question of why, when and where to fight a battle is a matter of strategy.[118] The machinic phylum, DeLanda says, has difficulty entering the stage of strategy. In this regard the military apparatus has difficulty influencing civil society and has to operate on political, diplomatic and propagande levels. Videogames and other mainstream media are means by which the military seeks to bypass political diplomacy and influence the population through reflexed conditioning. Why a nation might wish to go to war rests on political motive. War games, however, allow the military to bypass diplomacy and model conflict at the level of mathematics. Since the

1950s, the RAND Corporation has modeled nuclear negotiations between superpowers on a "Prisoner's Dilemma" in which the best option is to disarm. The next option is to betray the enemy and build one's nuclear arsenals. Class Wargames calls on the multitude to build its arsenal of networked communications as means to build a new leftist offensive against global capitalism. Class Wargamers are neither peaceniks nor refuseniks. There is no end to this process, however, and as DeLanda argues, the choice between disarmament and betrayal must be made over and over again in the process of gaming. War games that tend to emphasize cooperation maximize benefits. In contrast, games that betray soon lead to spirals of counter-betrayal and retaliation. Some games combine retaliation with forgiveness in conflictual relations. The latter has been the policy of war games since the 1950s.

Although cooperative strategies are the most rational means to survive in a networked system of exploitation, the evolution of war games tends towards betrayal. One wonders in this case if one must choose between the Game of War and the reality of the military-entertainment gamespace. The allegorithmic relationship between the Game of War and gamespace could be elucidated as a space of fantasy. The fantasy, and the problem for strategy, is that one must choose the path of cooperation or the path of betrayal. To put this in the terms of the film *The Matrix* (Wachowski Brothers, USA, 1999), if you choose the blue pill of cooperation you wake up and you can believe whatever you want to believe. If you choose the red pill of betrayal, you stay in Wonderland and you see how far down the rabbit hole the military-entertainment complex actually goes. The problem with the red pill, however, is that the tendency towards computerization in war games is biased in favour of conflict. Inasmuch as humans are taken out of the loop of war games, AI robots are much more prone to cross the nuclear threshold into mutually assured annihilation.[119] Here DeLanda's analysis reflects Judith Butler's argument that it does not follow that even if society conceives of human life as precarious, such a society will resolve to protect that life. The question of personhood and the intelligibility and recognizability of human beings is all the more compromised when reduced to schemes that are defined by technoculture rather than by social and political norms that are inclusive and egalitarian. In the context of the military-industrial complex, questions of social reproduction, of the conditions of precarious life, are directly subsumed by the conditions of capitalist valorization. It is not so much that only some people count as subjects, as Butler emphasizes, but, from the point of view of networks, that subjects are only valued inasmuch as their lives and their productivity is measurable in terms of value.[120]

Herein lies the complexity of the allegorithm as a psychoanalytic problem. In Žižek's terms, the choice between the blue pill and the red pill is not a choice between the illusion of online gaming and the reality of the offline gaming. Our reality is structured by games and similar "generative fictions,"

to use Steyerl's term. "If you take away from our reality the symbolic fictions that regulate it, you lose reality itself."[121] Žižek calls for a third pill. This third pill allows us to perceive reality in illusion. Realities that are too traumatic have to be fictionalized, he argues. Why, we could ask, does the Game of War need us? Why do we need the fantasy of class struggle in the form of a board game? Why do we need a Game of War as a way to help us accept or reject the dramatic rise of militarism and plutocracy? The problem is not that we take the Game of War too seriously, it is that we do not take it seriously enough. The Game of War, to paraphrase Žižek, is more real than it seems to us. If in reality it always seems that we are unable to win the class struggle against neoliberal capitalism, the Game of War teaches us that struggle is the truth of our lives, a truth that is often too traumatic to access directly. We do not know the way out of capitalism and at the same time we know that we are on the brink of human extinction, either through nuclear war or through environmental degradation. It is not a mere coincidence that human-caused climate change will be at the centre of future conflicts and that the military is the world's single greatest cause of atmospheric pollution. The political view of armed conflict advocated by Clausewitz and Debord, in contrast to the purely military approaches that began with von Neumann and the RAND Corporation, keeps humans trapped within the cybernetic systems they have created. Relatedly, what makes Lacanian mathemes superior to the mathematics divisions of the war games establishment is the fact that they keep human agency in the loop. The problem then with war games is not simply that they blur the lines between illusion and reality, and not simply that war games pretend to give predictive certainty to human action, but rather that they do not have either a good grasp of the human condition or of capitalism as a generative matrix that is prone to crisis and destruction.

DeLanda argues that mathematics are currently unable to model nonlinear friction dynamics that give rise to processes of self-organization. The emphasis on cooperation, collaboration and participation that is promoted by network ideology, however, links the social factory to the military-entertainment complex. The logistical level of post-Fordism, which must supply humanity with endless amounts of food, fuel and computer networks, is managed by neoliberal bureaucracies that increasingly promote high-tech weaponry. For instance, candidates in both the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. now actively assert their military and intelligence organization work experience, if they have it. Cooperation allows for feedback between civilian and military industries, thereby commercializing violence and associating militarism with the needs of expanding markets. In the control networks of the military-industrial complex, it is impossible to know where the military ends and where civilian life begins. Everything from highways and airports to the digital protocols of the Internet have been developed largely as problems of military logistics,

assisted by the related fields of management science and systems analysis, otherwise known as operations research. As is well known, the Advanced Research Programs Agency Network (ARPANET) was created in the 1960s as a means to survive nuclear attack. What later emerged as the decentralized structure of the Internet began as a distributed network of computers that allowed for flows of information to self-organize.

What remains an enigma from the point of view of military analysis as well as from DeLanda's Deleuzian machinic phylum is whether or not systems are designed to get humans out of the loop or to integrate them into systems. The idea of collective control through cooperation underscores the chimera of evolution through technology. Did the Situationists' advocacy of workers' councils really anticipate the network politics of the twenty-first century, as Barbrook argues? Barbrook writes:

> For many young revolutionaries in 2011, the interactive capabilities of the Net showed how politics should be conducted in the modern hi-tech world. Everyone with a computer, tablet or mobile was now able to make their own media. Empowered by these network technologies, people no longer needed professional politicians to represent their views to them.[122]

On the other hand, as he puts it, is this autonomist "remix of the McLuhanist prophecy" just "the latest upgrade of the old capitalist system"?[123] Is to think otherwise to be infected by the virus of Bolshevism? As Barbrook adds further, Class Wargames' third phase was dedicated to the Game of War as an antidote to the "authoritarian assumptions of vanguard politics."[124] What seems obvious enough to us is that Debord's Game of War was a means to teach Hegelian Marxism in an age that had reduced all of social theory to cybernetics and to what Lefebvre referred to as *l'idéologie structuraliste*, wherein technoscience pre-empts all questions of historicity.[125] Whatever we may think about the Situationist refutation of the vanguard party's "monopoly over political subversion," the critique of what Barbrook refers to as the "zero sum matrix of global competition" is what is most paradoxical in the Game of War.[126]

Wo Es War, Soll Ich Werden

Lacan's four discourses allow us to further question the fantasy loop of the Game of War as a comprehensive allegorithm. In the early 1970s Lacan developed a supplement to the Discourse of the University, a slightly modified Discourse of the Capitalist that is marked out as $ / S1 · S2 / a. In his Italian seminar, Lacan argued that in relation to both capitalism and the university, it is science today that "runs the game."[127] When asked if his algorithmic apparatus

of the four discourses did not in some way propose a systemic metalanguage of its own, Lacan replied that one would need to question the place of language in such as apparatus, but that nevertheless a point of contact emerges in the social link through the master signifier, but that it functions in different ways in each of the four discourses. There is nevertheless, he says, a convergence between mathematics and psychoanalysis that is universal at the level of mathemes. The level of algorithmic structure and its divisions allows us therefore to say something about human existence.[128] If we were to take Galloway and Wark's concept of allegorithm as the "third pill" that refuses the false choice between game and gamespace, or the false choice between the Internet and the outernet, in Terranova's terms, then the four discourses become different ways in which we can game the Game of War. For starters, Lacan's emphasis on jouissance breaks through the University Discourse as the horizon of the hermeneutic according to which there is no alternative to capitalism.

This is the topic proposed by Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi in an essay titled "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded."[129] Feldner and Vighi argue that the value-form is the generative, unconscious matrix of modern society but that this form has today reached its "absolute historical limit" and is now in terminal decline.[130] The specifically Lacanian aspect of their approach establishes that the value-form functions as the unconscious social link. While it is easy enough to imagine that capitalism will find new ways to revolutionize production and social relations, their argument is that through debt-financed growth, neoliberalism reflects the fact that a certain ideological covenant of capitalism has been abandoned. The current debt crisis, with its deregulation and anti-state privatization, cannot be overcome through financialization. Today's "third industrial revolution" is compromised externally by the ecological crisis but also internally insofar as it is based on the de-valorization of labour, leading to ever-larger populations of unemployed and redundant workers. The advancement of automation and the digital revolution exacerbate the devalorization of capital. According to Marx's *Capital*, surplus value is not a property of the commodity but rather a part of the social mass of labour power. Capital today, however, assumes that it has a life beyond labour. For these reasons, leftist politics that are based on labour struggles, wages and working-class identity are themselves running an ideological deficit. We can see this today as people in post-Fordist societies no longer think of themselves as working-class since most do not have the kind of work stability that only a few decades ago came with that profile. Consequently, as they put it, "labour must be turned from a privileged standpoint into an object of the critique of capitalism."[131] Any return to Marx, they argue, must tarry with those aspects of Marxism that challenge the capitalist matrix rather than put it to good use as part of a policy of industrial labour and full employment. As Marx himself proposed, labour under capitalism is alienated labour and the purpose of class struggle is the abolition of labour.

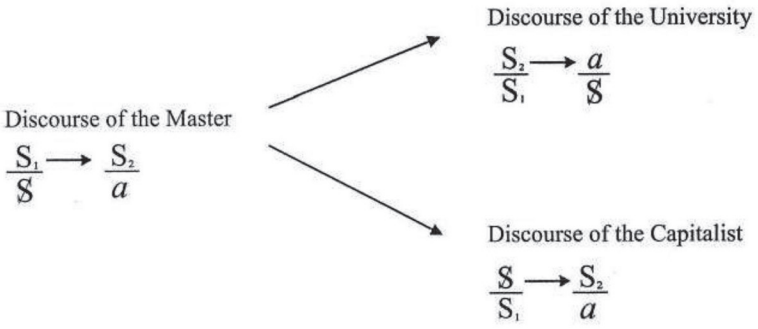


Table from Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded."

On this score Feldner and Vighi turn to Lacan's Discourse of the Capitalist to show how the Master's domination has been reinforced by the discourses of the University and the Capitalist. The hidden symptom of both these discourses, the Discourse of the University and the Capitalist, is the master signifier (S1). This means that power and mastery are invisible and therefore all the more indisputable. In the shift from the Discourse of the University to that of the Capitalist, mastery (S1) retains the status of unconscious truth but the agent of the discourse changes from knowledge (S2) to that of the subject ($). In the first case it is knowledge that is undermined but in the second it is the subject, who is produced by Capitalism as lack (a), a subject driven by blind desire. In this capitalist context, they write, "we act as if we were free agents, self-determining our lives, while in fact we are at the mercy of an unconscious command."[132] The injunction to know is replaced by the injunction to enjoy, both of which are coercive as they come under the unconscious control of the master signifier. As they put it:

> The agent of the discourse of the Capitalist, whether the worker or the consumer (or both), is the subject of the unconscious ($) paradoxically in a position to command, believing himself to be omnipotent. The capitalist worker/consumer addresses the other as 'expert knowledge' (an illusory neutral and therefore seemingly all-powerful knowledge) and the effect of this link is the production of surplus-value, i.e. valorized surplus, a distortion of the surplus with *jouissance* as deadlock of any social link. Then, crucially, we arrive at the truth of the whole discourse, embodied by capitalism as master-signifier.[133]

Capitalism is therefore a kind of blind discourse, unaware of what drives it forward, a system of production that is disconnected from what it produces. Examples of this are today's self-destructive regimes of over-accumulation, overproduction and underconsumption. The authoritarian compulsion of capitalism keeps the worker socially, culturally, politically and economically networked through surplus enjoyment.

In his seminar on the logic of fantasy, Lacan associates the Discourse of the Capitalist with the rise in the status of science as the secret power that impels capitalism against itself. Surplus value and surplus enjoyment are now camouflaged, Lacan says, as technology. With the subject of the unconscious in the position of agency, the drive to command, control and communication of the self-organizing operations that DeLanda identified as an impersonal machinic phylum is given a psychoanalytic explanation. As this capitalized subject begins to wonder where human existence ends and where robotization begins, he or she shifts to the Discourse of the Hysteric, addressing impersonal networks as the prosthetic gods that veil the subject's desire. Insofar as technology and technique define the protocols that contemporary subjects produce and consume, science has the status of a lack that eludes humanity but that commands it by remote control – a positivized systems-production that represses negativity. This is the case for even a leftist envisioned post-capitalism or cybernetic communism. As Berardi has it, politics in this context is replaced by technolinguistic automatisms.[134]

In the Discourse of the Capitalist, the subject is filled in with the knowledge that sustains the social link. This link can be dissociated and assembled in so many ways, but without ever escaping the mode of production. One of the concepts that defines the social link in Lacan is jouissance. Networked biocapitalism seeks to know the secrets of *objet a* – the desire of the Other – a lack that it conflates with value.[135] Enjoyment is for Lacan a jouis-sans, a without-enjoyment that links consumerism with dissatisfaction, a lack that can never be filled or satisfied but that through the superego injunctions of the mode and social relations of production entreat people to work and consume tirelessly. In the context of post-Fordist network ideology, according to media theorist Michael Seeman, the final boss is not the state, not the secret service and not the platform – the final boss, he says, is us:

> we have gained powers that we have not yet learned to wield: powers that are inadequately regulated, offer very few effective control mechanisms, and for which we have, so far, barely developed any cultural practices. Our true final boss is our inability to see ourselves as actual beneficiaries of these powers.[136]

The subjects of the Discourse of the Capitalist, however, are never aware that they are the boss because the function of the master signifier is their hidden

symptom. Their anxiety, if they were to become aware that they are the boss, would only be alleviated by entering the cycle of surplus value production. In other words, becoming the boss in this context would only undermine their subjectivity and possible resistance to capitalism. Network ideology, as with the New Communalists' countercultural support for digital platforms, believes it can rid itself of state and corporate domination. However, in the military-entertainment complex, the state and the private sector drive the high-tech innovations that our anxiety causes us to think we can master. Thinking that we can become the boss of our new machines implies keeping the enjoyment of network culture and the Game of Class War at a safe distance so that it does not overwhelm us. Playing the Game of War can thus become a regime of enjoyment that both subtends and subverts the Californian ideology.

In the Discourse of the Capitalist you can be neither for the system nor against it. The Discourse of the University supports the Capitalist by integrating our knowledge of the Game of War and converting it into surplus enjoyment. We enjoy Class Wargames just as we enjoy *Deus Ex*. This is why the Californian Ideology is already a sophisticated version of cybernetic communism, especially as this might be understood by autonomist theory. In the society of the digital spectacle, networked social upheavals are a means of jouissance. As Feldner and Vighi put it:

> The revolutionary spirit was hijacked and turned into a valorized spectacle, a commodity whose 'explosive potential' was not only constantly monitored, but also scientifically produced and regulated by the perverted master of the capitalist discourse. The explosion of political *jouissance* (extra-parliamentary splinter groups, armed struggle, etc.) was itself dexterously outmanoeuvred by capital (whose side interest was to retain its hegemonic role during a period of crisis), with the kind intercession of its political ally, liberal democracy.[137]

Insofar as they operate in terms of the Discourse of the Analyst, Class Wargames attempt to direct gamespace towards social organization. The real question perhaps is to what extent a Class Wargames event is a kind of knowledge work. One indication that we can shift its operations towards the Discourse of the Analyst rather than the Capitalist is that the subjects of capitalism do not very much know what they are doing. Their knowledge is subsumed by either the University Discourse or is in the place of the Other. Insofar as Lacan denounces the link between scientific knowledge and the objects of desire in the signifying network, we have the possibility that loss can work as something more than what is prescribed by the value-form. It is in the Discourse of the Analyst that *objet a* occupies the inverted place of fantasy. As

transference, the Game of War becomes a potentially endless session in which the subject reflects on the abyssal contingencies of life in the network of signifiers. And here again is what makes this discourse a potential alternative to that of the Capitalist. Like science, politics sometimes pretends that it can eliminate the gap between lack and plenitude. The vanguard-as-analyst has the potential to hold open the gap between the multitude and itself. In the Discourse of the Analyst, the worker is not equated – through his or her labour – with the value-form. Psychoanalysis does not propose the equivalence or synthesis of subject and object. Whereas capitalism attempts to transform the social link into value production, analysis undermines the social link by producing the master as symptom. The Game of War stages the signifying work of the big Other of class struggle. In the context of a world enthralled to University and Capitalist discourses, class struggle becomes the unrepresentable Real of signification and so the vanguard emerges in the guise of digital ideology, as cybernetic communism or as networked bioactivism.

In our post-Fordist era network ideology produces human beings as surplus labour. The upshot for Lacan's allegorithmic take on gaming gamespace is that class struggle has its own ontological inconsistencies. To labour in the world of capitalism is to ensure that you will be exploited and so to persist in enjoyment. For Marx, only the abolition of work can distinguish useful labour from abstract labour. We have similarly proposed the abolition of capitalist networking and the negation of abstract social relations that are based on the value-form. To no longer require that humans sell their labour power means to reject the capitalist battlefield. It means exiting transference with the Game of War. As technology makes human labour increasingly superfluous, and as capitalist value production is thereby undermined, there is a possibility that humanity will gain a new consciousness. As an exemplary instance of avant-garde anti-anti-art, Class Wargames reveals the method by which Debord managed to play and not play the game. In accordance with Vaneigem's idea of masters without slaves, the knowledge that is contained in the Game of War is awareness that today technoscience "runs the game" (*mène le jeu*), as Lacan says. It incorporates the know-how that the Situationists acquired over several decades of struggle. This is not the knowledge of a precarious worker in the chain of command, control and creativity, but a knowledge that reveals the impotence of the master since there is no subject that is ever fully determined by the game situation they find themselves in.

Khaled Akil, from the series *Pokémon Go in Syria*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

CONCLUSION

POKÉMON GODS

Well, you can have a cell phone and that's OK, but not me. Look, cause I don't, cause I won't. Look, when I'm on the beach, I'm on the beach. No you can't call me there. When I'm on a walk, I'm on a walk. And when it's breakfast time, it's breakfast time. What more can I say?
– Jonathan Richman

Do not use a cell phone. For cultural reasons. Use the Internet as a source of information only on the shallow sort of level. […] But the deeper things have to do with our existence, with the deeper levels of what we are, and you just don't do it through the Internet. I'm not nostalgic or anything. I'm not vilifying the cell phones, but to be with a family at the table, for example, having dinner, and the teenage daughter separates herself from everything and under the table she's texting. So she's not there. She's not a member of the family anymore.
– Werner Herzog

I'm really tired of phone zombies, you know … walking along with their glowing device. I'm so tired of, like … get a life, you're in the present, you're in the world. Put that fucking thing away, you know. And you gotta shove 'em out of the way… And when you go to a concert, too, everything is the device now, it's like wow, man, you're missing your whole life here.
– Jim Jarmusch

The different ways in which everyday life is shaped by today's cybercapitalism will result in new forms of alienation. Just as the anti-war and the anti-nuclear movement have educated populations about the threats posed by the multi-trillion-dollar military-entertainment complex, it is almost inevitable that algorithmic decision-making processes, personality scores, brain implants and automation will lead to anti-network movements and struggles. One example of this is the reaction in March 2018 by Facebook users who discovered that the social networking company had worked with Cambridge Analytica to datamine the personal information of 50 million users in order to target political advertising and facilitate Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign through psychographic modeling. Although similar methods were used in 2008 to facilitate the Obama campaign, thousands of users reacted to the news and some pledged to unfriend Facebook. The artist Jeremy Deller created a poster with instructions on "How to Leave Facebook." Interestingly, his work was commissioned by the Rapid Respnse Unit, an activist group that works on projects that mirror the speed and reach of the 24-hour news cycle: a cultural politics of instant indignation that raises the Invisible Committee's questioning of the possibility of symmetric warfare between cybernetic power and networked resistance. What most people did not know is that Cambridge Analytica is a parent company of the British-based SCL, a behavioural research company with ties to the royal family, various Tory contributors and politicians, billionaires, establishment figures and military contractors, and who have carried out "behavioural change programmes" in more than 60 countries. In this context, it is potentially helpful to appreciate how the dominant tendencies in the era of the global petty bourgeoisie are that of the Discourses of the University, Hysteric and Capitalist. While in some ways the Discourses of the Master and the Analyst seem to belong to an outmoded era of political and artistic avant gardes that have been replaced today by the logic of networked horizontality and biopolitical feedback, the structures of fantasy and transference provide a more complex understanding of our relation to the militant past than the teleologies of an Oedipus myth. In other words, the radical legacies of utopian socialism, workers' movements, communist parties and artistic and intellectual avant gardes are screen memories that are seen from the perspective of a post-political paradigm which considers that class struggles have irrevocably shifted towards micro and molecular processes that take place beneath the level of consciousness. A post-structuralist left calls on radicals to forget old left paradigms and accept the new spirit of capitalism. The core programme of the avant garde nevertheless persists in the struggle for new forms of organization and in our consciousness of cybernanthropic subsumption.

Monster Economies

A subtle example of the Discourse of the Analyst, the frontispiece to this concluding chapter, is an image from the series *Pokémon GO in Syria* by the Syrian artist Khaled Akil. The image depicts the blue fire-breathing and flying Mega Charizard Pokémon pocket dragon juxtaposed with the ruined, bombed-out buildings of a Syrian street. Akil's series represents rebel fighters as well as civilians and takes a stance against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, against religious fundamentalism, and against U.S. and Russian imperialism. The work, as he puts it, is "a blatant 'NO' to the war in Syria."[1] The image of Pokémon GO in Syria brings to mind a legacy of avant-garde collage and montage, especially the work of John Heartfield, Hannah Höch and Richard Hamilton. All of these were references for Martha Rosler's 1966-72 series of photomontages, *Bringing the War Home*, in which Rosler superimposed documentary images from the war in Vietnam with home decoration magazines that advertised the American Dream. Whereas Rosler's works from this period were exhibited in underground and feminist magazines, Akil's work can be seen on his website, in the flows of the Internet, which have the advantage of bypassing some of the usual art gallery gatekeeping mechanisms.[2] The Internet collapses and confuses the usual distinctions between underground and mainstream. Moreover, by making use of Pokémon GO, Akil's image alters the ways in which Rosler's images were targeting the class-specific aspects of middle-class domesticity and addresses instead a now hegemonic global petty bourgeoisie.

What meanings can be derived from the uncanny juxtapositions of *Pokémon GO in Syria*? In *Disparities*, Žižek discusses a similarly uncanny meeting between Pope John Paul II and Stephen Hawking. The Pope is alleged to have said to Hawking: "We are well in agreement, mister astrophysicist: what happens after the Big Bang is your domain; what happens before is ours."[3] Žižek objects, however, to the pseudo-synthesis according to which theology deals with one side and science with the other. The void of what came before the Big Bang, he argues, is immanent to the space of science. Reading this work by Akil, we could say something similar: the image cannot be explained by recourse to an analysis of only the regime of Bashar al-Assad, the rebels of al Qaeda and al Nusra, the Pentagon and the Kremlin, but must be understood from the perspective of technoculture, which includes the global phenomenon of Pokémon GO. In other words, the war is immanent to the global space of the military-entertainment complex and of networked communications.

Pokémon GO is an augmented reality game application that is designed for use on smartphones.[4] The app encourages users to walk, run and jump to in order to "catch" as many as 151 virtual Pokémon creatures, or "pocket monsters," which are part of the Pokémon universe that was created in the mid-to-late 1990s in the form of Game Boy video games, television series, comic books, plush toys and thousands of spinoff products made possible by

Nintendo's flexible copyright license. The original Pokémon products were translated into dozens of languages and so are familiar to hundreds of millions of millenials, who are now in their twenties and thirties. The idea of the cute comic characters was invented by Satoshi Tajiri, who lamented that the Japanese children's practice of bug hunting and bug fighting was no longer accessible to urbanized kids. The cartoon world he invented is thus a menagerie of differently powered creatures who are trained and cared for until they can be fought like gladiators in specially designed gyms – just as children used to breed and battle their crickets and rhinocerous beetles. The cuteness (*kawaii*) of the bugs and the notion of caring for them thus contrasts with their fate as battling enemies.

Nintendo's "same generation hypothesis," which tracks audience demographics, anticipated that Pokémon GO would have a built-in audience. They were correct, at least in the first few weeks of the game, as Pokémon GO surpassed Twitter and other social media apps in terms of daily use. Using a smartphone's GPS system, camera and clock, Pokémon GO overlays the virtual world of Pokémon characters on top of the real world. Despite similar augmented reality games by the company Niantic, Nintendo's corporate partner for Pokémon GO, this game represents the first widespread use of augmented reality. It has been far more successful, for example, than the fledgling Google Glass.[5] The game works by allowing users to catch and collect different strength Pokémons, which are randomly scattered in public places around your town or city, and which vary depending on whether you are near water or grassy areas, or depending on the time of day you do your hunting. The Pokémon can then be trained and fought in what are called Gyms, as one will have seen in the television series and comics. The Poké Balls and lures that are needed to catch Pokémon can be collected at PokéStops, where you can meet other players. Various organizations, including the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign and Black Lives Matter, have used PokéStops and have given away free Pokémon as means to bring attention to their campaigns or products. Nintendo allows such sponsors as well as individual users to buy Pokémon GO characters and there are monetary ways to "power up" a character's fighting strength. As well, hacking exploits, such as altering your GPS location, can make collecting easier. Since Niantic based its Pokémon GO Stops on the same portal locations as its previous game, Ingress, users can purchase this earlier game to gain access to Niantic's Intel maps and then team-source this information.

Like any other craze, Pokémon GO has led to both excesses and media panics due to the game's particularities. PokéStops and Gyms have appeared in undesirable locations, such as people's homes, near playgrounds and even memorial sites like Auschwitz, the Holocaust Museum in Washington and the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. The reason for this is that Pokémons can appear anywhere there are players. As with any other cell phone use, this

smartphone gaming has caused people to walk into car traffic and to be negligent of other people around them, sometimes playing while driving. Because the game's GPS system only has a vague idea of where you are in real space, it can cause a particularly avid user to risk their physical safety or to trespass. Addicted users have also been known to avoid daily necessities and rare monsters have created user congestion in random places. Rival Pokémon teams have also been known to take battling into the real world.

One of the telling features of Pokémon GO is that it is available for free download for Android and iOS devices. More than half of users are aged 18 to 24 and roughly another half are aged 25 to 35. Studies have shown that this demographic is more likely to recognize the character Pikachu than the Vice President of the United States. In most western countries, 75% of adults have smartphones and Pokémon GO could at one time be found on roughly 5% of these. Early adopters played an average of 45 minutes per day, making the game more popular than the dating app Tinder. Because the app imposes Pokémons onto any setting, users can have their camera take a picture of the Pokémon with any subject of their choice. One reason the game is made available for free is that use of the game provides Niantic with access to your IP address, browsing information, username and location, as well as access to your Google information if you use an iOS device – another instance of the Dallas Smythe concept of the audience commodity.

The success of Pokémon GO allowed Nintendo to make $1.6 million per day in the first few weeks after its launch. One problem with products like Pokémon GO, as with Amazon, Google and Facebook, is that it accumulates capital for a small number of companies in Japan and Silicon Valley but does not feed back into local economies, creating a decline in the strength of consumer demand.[6] However, there are more pernicious aspects to the game that are less obvious. Cultural studies scholar Max Haiven has argued that the original series of Pokémon products, in particular the Pokémon game cards, is demonstrative of the financialization of contemporary cultural life.[7] The intensification of finance, risk, debt and cognitive labour in digital capitalism conscripts our imaginations, he says, and offers new, sophisticated forms of agency within a logic of value accumulation. Pokémon cards are a microcosm of the ways in which finacialization is imbricated in everyday life. Children who speculate through Pokémon cards imitate the problems of debt that their parents may be burdened with, becoming "entrepreneurs of the self" and cultivating biocapitalism's transformation of life choices, from education to careers, home ownership and personal relations, into investments in the future. Where sustainable forms of social existence decline, speculation helps people to map the future. However, the "interwoven networks of speculation and debt under financialization," Haiven says, narrow the potentials of the future into an economically disciplined "end of history."[8] As we become self-educated managers

of our personal survival, capitalist reproduction pushes social life beyond the control of human agency. Reckless accumulation for its own sake leads to climate crisis, economic bubbles and military occupations. The Pokémon GO slogan "Gotta catch 'em all!" is according to Haiven a "perfect distillation of the cultural politics of capitalism," with its militarist themes and accumulative ethos. This is not a simple matter of greed, however, as today's capitalism invests subjectivity and creativity with connectivities between people, relying on the production of networks, ideas and imagination.[9] The brilliance of Ninendo's Pokémon universe is that it was not simply designed as a product that one buys for oneself but as a social medium and a vector of agency in a world of social networks and soft control that harnesses and leverages people's creativity, imagination and affect.

Haiven has extended his analysis to the phenomenon of Pokémon GO. He argues against the notion that the game represents a simple triumph of escapist fantasy over reality and looks instead at the ways in which what is imaginary is also real and shapes action.[10] The logic of financialization is today more globally interconnected and digitally accelerated. It exerts more pressure on corporations, government, prices and debt than it did when Haiven first studied the Pokémon card game. The introduction of Pokémon GO into everyday social practice is thus a symptom, he says, of the intensification of financialization. Like other digital platforms, the app generates revenue by transforming data into information about people's behaviours, social connections and consumer preferences. Data is a new form of capital and a new way to commodify life through speculative, pre-emptive anticipation of future potentials. Trade in the future, he argues, requires only a limited commercial infrastructure for the exchange of financial assets that rely on shared beliefs. Through the use of supercomputers, finance redeems everyday life, creating up to 80 percent of the volume of global capital exchange. Investment and risk thereby program our social imaginations. Pocket monsters are in this sense not unlike money since they are part of the value set that comes with belief in the free market, in neoliberal privatization and deregulation, and in authoritarian populism and militarization.

Haiven's text on Pokémon GO elaborates the extent to which network ideology has occupied our everyday imaginations. For him, Pokémania is a symptom of the financialization of the imagination in terms of both material and immaterial gain. Investment in the future is conceived by neoliberal ideology as an individualized rather than collective risk, from parenting to friendship and love relations. Survivalism causes us to seek safety for ourselves as we ignore and resent systemic efforts to undo structures of oppression, racism and inequality. Haiven's text targets the "normative" subject of the authoritarian and populist right, a stereotypically straight white working-class male who has been outsourced out of work. In this regard both leftist and rightist versions

of economic nationalism, whether that of Bernie Sanders or Donald Trump, Jeremy Corbyn or Theresa May, represent a misguided nostalgia for the golden age of Keynesianism. He writes:

> Yet while this golden age may very well have provided middle-class security for straight, white, able-bodied men, it was miserable and often deadly to women, people of colour, those with physical or mental disabilities, queer and gender non-conforming persons, children and youth and others who fell outside of its strict normative boundaries. By the late 1960s, nearly all these populations were in open revolt.[11]

Haiven calls for political organization, but suggests, not unlike Class Wargames, that all of our imagination will be required if we are to prevent unifying visions from becoming monstrous regimes. Although he acknowledges that much capitalized value is a result of financial speculation, he considers colonial plunder to be the source of most wealth. Financialized debt is the result of social institutions, which are the product of shared imaginative effort and are held in place with violence. He gives the example of heteronormative monogomous marriage, which he argues is a social institution and a contrivance of the imagination that organizes social affinities. It justifies exclusions by captivating, conscripting, seducing and recalibrating our imagination. If we open ourselves to the collective imagination that is augmented by global telecommunications networks, he further argues, we might be able to think and act beyond existing sexual mores, including other authoritarianisms like ethnic nationalism, religion, xenophobia and similar forms of perverse collectivity.[12]

Subjectivity in One Country

Haiven's arguments concerning the equivalence between class struggle and identity struggles corresponds to different versions of the democratic idea, from radical democracy to difference politics, intersectionism and privilege theory. Any reaction to the politics of feminism, decolonialism or sexual minorities is presented by him as the "proto-fascist authoritarian disposition," the "surplus rage among privileged subjects" who resent what they perceive as the "special benefits" awarded by the liberal elite and who may not speak out against these inequalities for fear of being labeled racist, sexist or cis-gender male. For Haiven, the characteristics of this proto-fascism are not due to political ideology but to subject position: the normative white male whose imagination is dead "because it is denied the prospect of the unknown."[13] For Haiven, it is "revanchist white nationalism" that produces the real pocket monsters that stalk the earth.[14]

What Haiven calls for to battle this world of monsters is a "more capacious imagination of risk" based on cooperation and progressive collectivism.[15] It requires that we come together and open ourselves to the experiences, rituals and protocols of the Other beyond normativity. What Haiven's approach does not allow for, however, is a critique of identity struggles from a leftist position of universal emancipation. Given that neoliberal biocapitalism is effectively in place everywhere around the world, it is false to think that oppression functions in strict accordance with the interests of straight white European men, even in cases when this can be proven to be true and even if this is historically accurate. Moreover, identity politics and identity struggles are not only the preserve of leftist liberals but have become part of the language of corporate capitalism.[16] The multiculturalist sensitivity to the interests of the Other is also an unacknowledged point of assumed privilege and superiority. This is why the artist and philosopher Adrian Piper believes that the concern to not be perceived as racist is a typical feature of the guilt complex of white liberals.[17] Piper's work, however, relies on problems of classification. A psychoanalytic approach would add to this the problem of repression and could inform Haiven's discussion of financialization by proposing a labour theory of the unconscious. As Žižek argues, the paradox of perverse collectivity and the logic of transgressing norms is that it increases repression, with today's permissiveness confusing frigidity with liberation. A politically or collectively bioengineered sexual revolution would not suspend the trauma of repression, but would encounter even more directly the capitalist unconscious of social reality. The interests of the Other is also capital's sublation of its material conditions, with social relations realized as what they really are: the virtuality of commodity fetishism, or, in this case, sex as the sublime non-relation of ideology.[18]

As a problem of the relation between particular and universal, contingency and necessity, the question of non-normativity should be understood to be immanent to the space of normativity, even when spoken by ostensibly non-normative subjects. This is why many queer theorists distinguish what they do from the universe of homonormativity, as exemplified by Eve Sedgwick's axiomatic slogan that people are different.[19] But is this enough? We cannot accept fascism on the basis that its adherents are different. The political import of queer theory cannot be approached by the adjudication of who or what is normal and who or what is not. Certainly this is consistent with psychoanalysis, which does not presume a normative subject. People are different not only because they do not want to be normal, but also because they want to be normal. A person may espouse rightist ideology as either a means to shore up normativity or as part of a rejection of what they perceive as normativity. Racism can be and has been a support of capitalism, but anti-racism can also become and is used to support capitalist ideology. In this sense Sedgwick had the correct method, which is not to propose an organic solution. Rather than

imagine an uncorrupted system, Žižek argues, the more radical solution is to identify the problem as the symptom of the entire system, which abolishes the system as such.[20]

Haiven's approach and similar cultural studies frameworks do not go far enough in universalizing the system that is opposed from various minority perspectives. Sexuality, for instance, and when seen from the point of view of psychoanalysis rather than social constructionism, is understood to involve perversions and strange rituals but not a natural substance. However, even if it is not a natural substance, sexuality is not simply the presumed opposite of this substance, a socially and culturally defined process that is therefore open to systems control, if only we had the imagination or the collective will to change sexual mores. Sexuality, according to Žižek's reading of Freud, is a break with instinctual life and a shift towards the domain of drives. Sexuality is as such highly spiritualized. Politically correct social engineering seeks to positivize desire and to prescribe how it is that one must desire, much as the Christian Church attempts to normalize sexuality by associating sex with love, or much as the way the petty-bourgeois habitus, as Pierre Bourideu described it, attempts to obliterate sex by making it into a lifestyle choice that one then seeks to promote to other people. We have here the entire panoply of "liberated" sexual mores of the counterculture, from nudist colonies to swinger clubs, orgies and partner swaps – all of these exhorting people to experiment with something that is nebulous and meaningless to even the adherents themselves.[21] It is for this reason that Badiou distinguishes desire and sexuality from love and commitment and also why he distinguishes love from art, politics and science.[22] Although Haiven recognizes that economic risk causes people to transform their personal relations into calculated ventures, one might also consider the extent to which a pseudo-organic collectivization of mores through multicultural sensitivity is a different solution to the same problem of the financialization of sociality.

The idea of normative sex, whether or not we associate it with monogamous heterosexuality, operates an ideological mystification, as Foucault well understood when he defined sex as an open secret.[23] However, Foucault wished to positivize sex through the study of its history within discursive regimes of intelligibility. A psychoanalytic approach examines instead the ways in which sexuality, as a limit of ontology, has a traumatic, unintelligible dimension. In order to be incorporated into reality, the sublime virtuality of sex must fit the subject's fantasy frame, which has a transcendent dimension that sex activists would seek to "materialize." Fantasy is precisely that which sustains the subject's sense of reality. If one destroys another's fantasy frame they undergo a dangerous loss of reality and perceive the world in nightmarish terms. This was the case for instance with Alan Turing, the Cambridge mathematician whose computing machine helped to crack the Germans' Enigma code during World

War II. After the war, when it was discovered by the British police that he was "homosexual," which was illegal at the time, Turing was forced to undergo drug therapy. His reality as a closeted gay man was shattered, leading him to commit suicide a few years later. To engineer changes in social and sexual behaviour is from a Lacanian point of view to force people to give way on their desire. Because of this, capitalism has learned that it is more efficient when it provides people with means to indulge their fantasy frames.

One would hope that freedom of sexual choice and conventions of consent would be enough to distinguish a leftist sexual politics from a rightist one, keeping with the Marxist notion of communism "from each to each according to his or her needs." Reality filtering and fantasy frames, however, find strange perversions through biocapitalist tinkering. Consider for instance Hal Hartley's 2005 film *The Girl from Monday*, which depicts a science fiction future in which financialized citizens that have "gone public" are traded like property on the "open" stock market. In this brave new world, the "dictatorship of the consumer" has been brought about by Triple M, the Major Multimedia Monopoly. In order to raise their profiles with Triple M and remain competitive on the job/stock market, people have sex but remain emotionally unattached. They constantly monitor their personal worth and make seduction and sexual lifestyle part of their career strategy. Activists who resist this commodification lead a counter-revolution of sex for its own sake, only to discover that the system can exploit both the regulated "normative" economy as well as the underground "non-normative" sexual economy. In other words, the world in *Girl From Monday* is dominated by the Discourse of the University-Capitalist and the Discourse of the Hysteric.

Although this sci-fi scenario seems far-fetched, China's sincerity score is already a step in this direction, transforming desire, sociality and affect into public – read: collective – utilities, albeit, in favour of heteronormativity and procreation. If even this seems too exaggerated, one can think of the problems related to standardized testing in schools. The question for left radicalism is not the kind of sex one enjoys, but the question of whether and how it is possible to challenge capitalism when political correctness seeks to obliterate antagonisms. The critique of heterosexism as a privileged norm is contradictory insofar as it privileges "non-normative" sexualities that now dwell, as Žižek argues, between transgressive status and public legitimacy. In the context of new standards of sexual tolerance, heterosexuality comes to be perceived as a limitation, a privileged satisfaction with old patterns and consequently with social domination.[24] The paradox of queer universality is that not only do most people continue to experience themselves in terms of standard gender assignations, but that even non-standard designations contend in one way or another with the question of sexual difference. Straight sex, or homonormative sex, can only be made to appear static when seen from what should now begin

to be understood as a somewhat outdated postmodernism. The rejection of fixed forms of subjectivity, according to Žižek, is a feature of consumer and commodity society presenting itself as subversive of the dominant consumer and commodity society.[25] The point for him is not to establish a fixed norm, but to recognize that the late-capitalist postmodern self is already inscribed in philosophical modernity, from Descartes' *cogito* to Kant's transcendent self. The point I would add to this is that sexuality today is not simply hierarchical and restrictive but decentred and networked. These two modalities are not opposed, however, as noticed by the presence of surplus jouissance in the Discourse of the Capitalist, wherein human subjects now consume themselves as the raw materials and the products of the political economy. The solution to the straight bias in the sincerity score could easily extend control to all types of sexuality. This anyway is how today's biocapitalism puts a premium on identity markers, as noticed for instance in the proliferation of gender assignations on government forms. Networked capitalism does not produce normality but endlessly diversifies, destabilizes and flexibilizes human subjectivity within systems of control. One would thus need to reexamine the question of emancipation in these conditions.

The link between surplus enjoyment and surplus value gives Pokémon GO an unexpected perspective on the avant garde. Although Sianne Ngai argues that the principle of death in animistic reifications like Pokémon GO is an index of art's powerlessness in consumer society, we see at the same time how this smartphone app is useful for understanding ideology.[26] Žižek argues that Pokémon GO creates a fantasy frame through which we can see the reality around us.[27] The virtual Pokémon sustain our desire to participate through the construction of a fantasy frame that is similar to other ideological systems. According to Žižek,

> What the technology of Pokémon GO externalizes is simply the basic mechanism of ideology. At its most basic, ideology is the primordial version of augmented reality. Again, to simplify things to the utmost, did Hitler not offer the Germans in the 1930s the fantasy frame of Nazi ideology, which made them see a specific Pokémon – the Jew.[28]

In Nazi ideology, according to Žižek, you walk down the street and you see Jews popping up everywhere as though they are part of a conspiracy. The Jew, like the Pokémon, becomes the sublime object-cause of desire, which is otherwise misperceived. The same holds for other ideological pseudo-entities, he says. These could be "dangerous immigrants," as encouraged by the games being played by the Trump administration, for instance, but it can also be "revanchist white nationalists," as liberals often imagine the white working class.

While "revanchist" white working-class nationalists have been blamed for the Trump election victory, research indicates that Trump's electoral base was rather the white middle class. Whereas some economically depressed regions were fooled by Trump's promise to create employment, the African-American and Latino working class simply abstained from voting, seeing no change in either the post-Obama Democrats or the Republicans.

In an ever more cybernetically engineered society, just as was the case in Stalinism, you can never be guilty enough, which means that anything an individual subject does, in terms of either collaboration or dissent, works as proof of the correctness of the dominant ideology. The point is not to deny that there are white nationalists and monogamous heterosexuals, but rather to see how in a conspiracy frame the extruding element has been added to an organic reality that is assumed to be otherwise complete and meaningful. This is why Jameson proposes that dual power in his American utopia would be regulated by the complex computer systems of a Psychoanalytic Placement Bureau. For Lacan, according to Jameson, there is no such thing as a normal society. Any macro or micro-assemblages would therefore require an appreciation of the Lacanian supplement of lack as an inherent feature of the human condition.[29] This does not imply the rejection of social norms such as human rights and freedom from coercion. On the contrary. At the same time, it also does not imply the freedom to do anything one likes.

Haiven's approach is typically leftist in presuming that our troubles are caused by social antagonisms that require social solutions. Like Haiven, Žižek argues that Pokémon GO tends to provide a personalized perception of social antagonisms. The critique of the capitalist financialization of everyday life and of networked biopower, however, can be appropriated for leftist as well as rightist purposes. Insofar as leftists understand their everyday lives to be immanent to economic systems, social relations of production and new technologies – and this would be the same if one presumed a determining sexual economy – they fail to isolate the basic mechanisms of ideology. The Pokémon make reality more interesting but only on condition that they remain unconscious. As long as they are misperceived, the Pokémon as *objet a* allow you to cope with confused reality. This is why the problem of politics is an inherent problem of social division and not simply a hegemony contest.

Can Charizard Organize the Transition?

The function of an avant-garde politics and aesthetics is to resist the positivization of *objet a*. This means at the same time to do away with any ideology that opposes the individual and the collective. Because of the way individualism and society mirror one another in liberal ideology, the call by leftists for a collectivism that opposes itself to individualism is one-dimensional. Both

the individual and the collective are incomplete and each one attempts to fill in the inconsistencies in the other. The question of political programme and political organization is therefore tantamount, but not as a means of filling in the gaps. It is rather, as Žižek argues, a matter of ideology.[30] When we understand class struggle as division rather than unity we accept the possibility of the appearance of something like virtual communist Pokémon. Their overcoding of reality as something that is in a programme more than a program, as master signifiers, would filter the world according to hopes that are worthy of our imaginations. However, the term imagination in psychoanalysis refers only to a partial "ideal ego" that is always conditioned by the "ego ideal" or big Other. The *objet a* of a virtual communist agency would no doubt be inconsistent, but would also thwart the conceits of a post-human network immanentism.[31] No amount of shame concerning human limitations or fascination with our own technological prowess can close the circle and merge networks seamlessly with everyday reality. It is the incompleteness of reality that is occupied by Pokémon communists. Rather than taking the post-human exit strategy of a fully synthetic world of animal cyborgs, can we resist the reduction of such Pokémon gods to being one thing among others in a neo-pagan universe of naturalist determination? Here again, Žižek provides the essential framework for the thinking of *Don't Network*:

> [H]ow are we to be materialists without regressing to an ontic view? The answer … is that the dimension that resists self-objectification is not human self-experience but the 'inhuman' core of what German Idealism calls negativity, what Freud called death drive, and even what Heidegger referred to as 'ontological difference': a gap or abyss which forever precludes the exclusively ontic view of humans as just another object among objects. This dimension is beyond any transcendental horizon, it aims at reaching the In-itself; however, the In-itself is not additions; the In-itself is 'here,' in the very subjective excess to what appears to us as objective reality.[32]

How then can we think of tomorrow's Poké communists as anything other than monsters that disrupt social harmony, or as subjects that are falsely universal? In this Žižekian view subject is not to be conflated with the human as an embodied, substantive contingency. There is nothing inevitable about communism for the simple reason that there is no human agency that has a proper place in the world. Poké communists are not us. On the other hand, insofar as they are us, they operate on the order of what Badiou calls an event, a subject that emerges out of alienation as its constitutive feature, an impossible entity that embodies the antagonism of every collectivity, system or network.

NOTES

Introduction: Prosthetic Gods

1. See bluefalcon561, "Series of Tubes," *YouTube* (July 17, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f99PcP0aFNE, accessed December 12, 2017.
2. Geert Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011) 6.
3. Zhenia Vasiliev, "Cyborg Politics: Notes for a Lexicon," *Open* (November 16, 2016), available at http://www.onlineopen.org/cyborg-politics, accessed December 12, 2017.
4. Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (London: Verso, 2016) eBook, 12, 34, 188. A perplexed assessment of this situation of cultural anomie is described in David Byrne, "I Don't Care About Contemporary Art Anymore?" *Davidbyrne.com* (October 7, 2014), available at http://davidbyrne.com/journal/i-dont-care-about-contemporary-art-anymore, accessed March 14, 2018.
5. Situationist International, "The Beginning of an Era," in Ken Knabb, ed. *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981) 225.
6. Situationist International, "The Beginning of an Era," 225.
7. Situationist International, "The Beginning of an Era," 226.
8. On the misuse of the work of Antonio Gramsci by cultural studies, see Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* (November-December 1976) 5-78, and Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," *Discourse* 10:2 (1988) 3-29.
9. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, trans. Robert Hurley (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [2014] 2015) 157.
10. Gerald Raunig, "Creative Industries as Mass Deception," in Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray and Ulf Wuggenig, eds. *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries'* (London: MayFly Books, 2011) 202.
11. Darin Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004) 83-4.
12. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (London/Toronto: Pluto Press/Between the Lines, 2015) 143.
13. See Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class… and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, & Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

14. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 177. The notion that natural organic systems map directly onto the corporate world is put forward in *Wired* magazine editor Kevin Kelly's *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1994).
15. Jared Cohen and Eric Schmidt, *The New Digital Age*, cited in The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 115.
16. Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [2009] 2010).
17. Gene Ray, "Culture Industry and the Administration of Terror," in Raunig et al., eds. *Critique of Creativity*, 179.
18. See for instance Liza Featherstone, ed. *False Choices: The Faux Feminism of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (London: Verso, 2015). For a more general discussion of the "neoliberalization" of feminism, see Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Crisis to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013). On Cornel West's democratic-socialist agenda and conflict with the black bourgeoisie, see Connor Kilpatrick, "Everybody Hates Cornel West," *Jacobin* #23 (November 23, 2016), available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/11/everybody-hates-cornel-west/, accessed December 12, 2017. See also "The Betrayal by the Black Elite," a discussion between West and Chris Hedges on *The Real News*, available on *YouTube* (August 11, 2015) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcJqjgB4tyQ, accessed December 12, 1017, and Thomas Frank, *Listen, Liberal, or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People?* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016).
19. Ray, "Culture Industry and the Administration of Terror," 179.
20. See Robin Mackay and Armen Avenessian, "Introduction," in Mackay and Avenessian, eds. *#ACCELERATE#* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014) 10.
21. Tiqqun, "The Cybernetic Hypothesis," *Tiqqun* #2 (2001) 16.
22. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIV: The Logic of Phantasy, 1966-1967*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, available at www.lacaninireland.com, accessed December 12, 2017. See also Milner cited in Slavoj Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void: Economico-Philosophical Spandrels* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017) 196.
23. Jan van Dijk, *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media* (London: Sage Publications, [1999] 2006).
24. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, [2004] 2008) 42.
25. Henri Lefebvre, *De L'État, Tome II: De Hegel à Mao par Staline (La théorie "marxiste" de l'état)* (Paris: 10/8, 1976).
26. Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Rebel Press, [1967] 2001) 30.
27. See Slavoj Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," in Žižek, ed. *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994) 1-33.
28. Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press) 23.
29. *Futurism and Dada Reviewed: 1912-1959*, CD, LTM Publishing, 2006.
30. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott

(London: Verso, [1999] 2005). See also Marc James Léger, "Welcome to the Cultural Goodwill Revolution: On Class Compositions in the Age of Classless Struggle," in *Brave New Avant Garde: Essays on Contemporary Art and Politics* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012) 82-99.

31. Marc James Léger, ed. *Culture and Contestation in the New Century* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).
32. Léger, *Brave New Avant Garde*, 2. See also George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2010) and Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).
33. The distinction between bohemian, historical and neo-avant gardes is discussed by Peter Bürger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).
34. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Farewell to an Identity," *Artforum* (December 2012) 255.
35. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 5.
36. Bruno Bosteels, "Three Paradoxes of Communist Art," in Marc James Léger, ed. *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today, Volume 2* (forthcoming).
37. John Roberts, "Introduction: Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary," *Third Text* 23:4 (2009) 358.
38. Alexander Galloway, "The Cybernetic Hypothesis," *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 25:1 (2014) 108.
39. Tiqqun, "The Cybernetic Hypothesis," 3, 29.
40. See Slavoj Žižek, "The Prospect of the Post-Human," lecture delivered at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, University of London, November 2, 2016, available at http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2016/11/slavoj-zizek-masterclass-3-between-philosophy-and-psychoanalysis/, accessed December 12, 2017. For an example of a race-based materialism that posits substantive notions of subjectivity in terms of matter (content without form), against which it then seeks to escape the value form and vanguard politics, or "refusal to contain blackness in the dialectical form," see Denise Ferreira da Silva, "1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ - ∞ or ∞ / ∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value," e-flux *Journal* #79 (February 2017), available at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94686/1-life-0-blackness-or-on-matter-beyond-the-equation-of-value/, accessed December 12, 2017.
41. "With every tool man is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory, or is removing the limits to their functioning. […] Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. […] But in the interest of our investigations, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character." Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, [1930] 1961) 43-5.
42. See Slavoj Žižek, "Objet Petit a and Digital Civilization," lecture delivered at the European Graduate School, *YouTube* (September 22, 2014), available at https://www.

youtube.com/watch?v=7ui7N1SZWJw, accessed December 12, 2017.

43. Galloway, "The Cybernetic Hypothesis," 127.
44. See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1984).
45. Léger, *Brave New Avant Garde*, 93. Empirical data on the dominance of the petty bourgeois habitus, based on the sociology of Bernard Lahire, is discussed in Tony Bennett, "*Habitus Clivé*: Aesthetics and Politics in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu," *New Literary History* 38:1 (2007) 201-28.
46. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 318-71.
47. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 19.
48. See Marc James Léger, "The Non-Productive Role of the Artist: The Creative Industries in Canada," in *The Neoliberal Undead: Essays on Contemporary Art and Culture* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2013) 86-107.
49. Marc James Léger, "Introduction: 1+1+a," in *Drive in Cinema: Essays on Film, Theory and Politics* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015) 3-25.
50. Gene Ray, "On the Conditions of Anti-Capitalist Art: Radical Cultural Practices and the Capitalist Art System," *Transversal* (November 2006), available at http://eipcp.net/transversal/0303/ray/en, accessed December 12, 2017.
51. Léger, "The Subject Supposed to Over-Identify: BAVO and the Fundamental Fantasy of a Cultural Avant Garde," in *Brave New Avant Garde*, 100-26.
52. The four discourses are discussed in Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, [1970] 1991). For Lacan's discussion of the Discourse of the Capitalist, see Jacques Lacan, *Lacan in Italia, 1953-1978 / Lacan en Italie, 1953-1978* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978).
53. Marc James Léger, "Whose Excellence? Our Excellence!" *Fuse* 33:3 (2010) 24-6. See also Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001).
54. These three positions are discussed in the opening pages of Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012).
55. That dialectical materialism encompasses idealism is a mainstay of Marxist thought. On this, see Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, trans. John Sturrock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1940] 2009). See also Slavoj Žižek, "Are Cultural Studies Really Totalitarian?" in *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis) use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001) 190-229.
56. Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," in *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume Two*, eds. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006) 151-82.
57. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 800-1.
58. Sven Lütticken, "Who Makes the Nazis?" e-flux *Journal* #76 (October 2016), available at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/76/69408/who-makes-the-nazis/, accessed December 12, 2017.

59. On this subject, see also Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004). Andrea Fraser has similarly suggested how the field of cultural production may have contributed to the ascention of the right. See Fraser, "Toward a Reflexive Resistance," *X-Tra* 20:2 (Winter 2018), available at http://x-traonline.org/article/artist-writes-no-2-toward-a-reflexive-resistance/, accessed March 21, 2018. The fact that Fraser continues to believe in the hegemony of bourgois ideology distinguishes her notion of what Bourdieu defined as the "dual action devices" of the avant garde, referring to work that challenges the existing forms of bourgeois art but that may be inscrutable to the working class, from the arguments I am presenting here. On this score, it is worth also distinguishing the dual action strategies of today's vanguard forms from a simplistic instrumentalism, as defined for instance in the notion of "dual use" (use and misuse) in critiques of artificial intelligence. See the report by 26 researchers from 14 organizations on *The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence: Forecasting, Prevention, and Mitigation* (February 2018), available at https://maliciousaireport.godaddysites.com, accessed March 21, 2018.
60. Slavoj Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours* (London: Allen Lane, 2016) 99.
61. Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail*, 100.
62. Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail*, 109.
63. Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail*, 102.
64. John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015) 47.
65. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 19.
66. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 43.
67. See Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).
68. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 24.
69. See Brian Holmes "1968 in the USA: Political Crisis in the Keynesian-Fordist Economy," *Continental Drift: The Other Side of Neoliberal Globalization* (November 8, 2011), available at https://brianholmes.wordpress.com /2011/11/08/1968-in-the-usa/, accessed December 12, 2017.
70. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 29.
71. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 10.
72. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 30.
73. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 33. Roberts' method is compatible with the Lacanian orientation of this project, since, as Lacan argued, the standard notion of science excludes subjectivity. See Jela Krečič, Slavoj Žižek & Nigel Warburton, "The Comedy of Life," *YouTube* (November 2, 2016), formerly available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mSa4gwWLEk.
74. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 35.
75. The mutual limitation of art and life is discussed in Boris Groys, *The Communist Postscript*, trans. Thomas H. Ford (London: Verso, [2006] 2009).
76. Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, 35. See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of*

Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, [2000] 2004). The deficit of radical theory in net.art and post-Internet art can be noticed, for instance, in Lauren Cornell and Ad Halter, eds. *Mass Effect: Art and the Internet in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015).

77. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 298.
78. See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, [1988] 2005) and *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, [2006] 2009), and Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation for Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014).
79. Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2005) 2.
80. Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, 7. Alexander Galloway suggests that Badiou's ontology, which makes use of set theory, can be mapped onto such object-oriented ontologies as computer algorithms. The notion, however, that capitalism structures subjectivity around objects would hardly come as a surprise to Badiou. Nor does it displace his core arguments. See Alexander Galloway, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism," *Critical Inquiry* 39:2 (Winter 2013) 347-66. Badiou's notion of the event of politics can also be distinguished from something like Simon Critchley's ethics of solidarity as an endless series of encounters among multiple singularities. See Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso, [2007] 2008).
81. See Alain Badiou, *Philosophy for Militants*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, [2011] 2012).
82. John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001) 125. Žižek could be said to support Badiou's distinction of a tuth event from that of democratic materialism by suggesting that the machine theory associated with the work of Gilles Deleuze and new materialisms could be used to define, and more stupidly, to defend the Holocaust in the terms of assemblage theory. See Slavoj Žižek, "Christian Atheism," *YouTube* (September 25, 2017), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UOM3C3q7II, accessed December 12, 2017.
83. See Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, [2009] 2012).
84. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 20.
85. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1997] 2003) 90. See also Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, [1993] 2001) and Slavoj Žižek, "Tolerance as an Ideological Category," *Critical Inquiry* #34 (Summer 2008) 660-82.
86. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 66-67. See also Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, [2007] 2008).
87. Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, [2010] 2013) 69.
88. Alain Badiou, "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art," (2004), available at http://www.lacan.com/frameXXIII7.htm, accessed December 12, 2017.

89. Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 72.
90. Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 72.
91. Badiou, *Cinema*, trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridie: Polity Press, [2010] 2013) x, 192.
92. See Alain Badiou, "Destruction, Negation, Subtraction: On Pier Paolo Pasolini," lecture delivered at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, February 6, 2007, available at www.lacan.com/badpas.htm, accessed December 12, 2017.
93. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 17.
94. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 42.
95. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 29.
96. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 48.
97. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 81.
98. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: O Books, 2009).
99. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 92.
100. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: Joyce and the Sinthome, 1975-1976*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, available at www.lacaninireland.com, accessed December 12, 2017.
101. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 503.
102. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 370.
103. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 293.
104. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 141.
105. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 150.
106. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 331.
107. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 646.
108. Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 100. Network theories like Galloway and Thacker's ontologize networks and seduce by predicting the future, anticipating a beyond to the present societies of control, from cybernetics to particle swarms, from computers to bioinformatics, from mutation to desertion, from randomness to non-existence, from disturbance to hypertrophy, from communities to multitude and from neoliberal capitalism to life in common.
109. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 765.

1. On Networks and Vulgarity

1. Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 11.
2. Geert Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011) 73.
3. Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause*, 74.
4. Joost de Bloois, "The Ontologized Commons," *Open* (February 1, 2016), available at https://www.onlineopen.org/download.php?id=507, accessed December 12, 2017.

5. Bloois, "The Ontologized Commons."
6. Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003).
7. Nathan Brown, "The Distribution of the Insensible," *Mute* (January 28, 2014), available at http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/distribution-insensible, accessed December 12, 2017.
8. Panzieri cited in Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 77.
9. Mario Tronti cited in Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 78.
10. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (1857-61), cited in Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 81.
11. Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 84.
12. Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* #62 (Autumn 1992) 16-17.
13. Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics," 17.
14. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
15. Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 177-82.
16. See Thoburn's description of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* in *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 90-1.
17. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour" (1996) cited in Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 100.
18. Darin Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
19. Barney, *The Network Society*, 28-32.
20. Barney, *The Network Society*, 26-7.
21. Steven Shaviro, *Connected, or What It Means to Live in the Network Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 10.
22. Anna Sergeevna Frolova and Yury Grigorievich Volkov, "Ideological Dimension of the Network Society and the Ideology of Global Humanism," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6:3 (May 2015) 40.
23. Barney, *The Network Society*, 6.
24. Barney, *The Network Society*, 25.
25. Barney, *The Network Society*, 129-30.
26. Castells cited in Barney, *The Network Society*, 168.
27. Shaviro, *Connected*, 4, 28.
28. Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008). The participative shift in media industries is also discussed in Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
29. Shaviro, *Connected*, 31.
30. Anselm Franke and Teixeira Pinto, "Post-Political, Post-Critical, Post-Internet: Why Can't Leftists Be More Like Fascists?" *Open* (September 8, 2016), available at http://www.onlineopen.org/post-political-post-critical-post-internet, accessed December 12, 2017.
31. Geert Lovink, "On the Social Media Ideology," e-flux *Journal* #75 (September 2016),

available at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/on-the-social-media-ideology/, accessed December 12, 2017.

32. Lovink, "On the Social Media Ideology."
33. Frolova and Volkov, "Ideological Dimension of the Network Society and the Ideology of Global Humanism," 43.
34. Slavoj Žižek, "Lacan's Hypothesis: Psychoanalysis as the Extimate Core of Philosophy," lecture delivered at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities (October 31, 2016), available at http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2016/10/slavoj-zizek-masterclass-1-between-philosophy-and-psychoanalysis/, accessed December 12, 2017. See also Žižek's lecture, "Is there a Posthuman God?," delivered at UCLA, March 2, 2017, uploaded by Kenneth Reinhard to *YouTube* (March 13, 2017), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiNu3YLVjH0, accessed December 12, 2017.
35. Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to the Future* (London: Penguin, 2015) eBook, 375. See also Jeremy Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
36. Christian Fuchs, "Henryk Grossmann 2.0: A Critique of Paul Mason's *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*," *tripleC* 14:1 (2016) 234.
37. Slavoj Žižek, "More Alienation, Please! A Plea for Politely Ignoring Others," lecture at Pordenonelegge 2016, *YouTube* (October 18, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWhYPGFSdnk, accessed December 12, 2017.
38. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (London/Toronto: Pluto Press/Between the Lines, 2015) 6.
39. Tiziana Terranova, "Red Stack Attack! Algorithms, Capital and the Automation of the Common," *EuroNomade* (May 8, 2014), available at http://www.euronomade.info/?p=2268, accessed December 12, 2017.
40. Cathy O'Neill, "Welcome to the Black Box," *Jacobin* (September 19, 2016), available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/09/big-data-algorithms-math-facebook-advertisement-marketing/, accessed December 12, 2107. See also, Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Crown, 2016) and Frank Pasquale, *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).
41. Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 124.
42. Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 6, 16, 22.
43. Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 30-1.
44. Žižek, "More Alienation Please! A Plea for Politely Ignoring Others."
45. Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) 275.
46. Morozov, *The Net Delusion*, 293.
47. Karl Marx, "The Metaphysics of Political Economy," in *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the* Philosophy of Poverty *by M. Proudhon* (1847), available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/, accessed December 12, 2017.

48. See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, [1948] 1965) and Edward A. Shanken, ed. *Systems* (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press/Whitechapel Gallery, 2015).
49. Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedoms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
50. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 2.
51. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 9.
52. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 357. The classic reference for the notion of weak ties is Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78:6 (1973) 1360-80.
53. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 20.
54. On this subject, see Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
55. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 362.
56. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 241.
57. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 255.
58. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (Williamsburgh: Minor Compositions, 2009) 21.
59. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardy, eds. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 132-46.
60. See Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) and Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1964] 1991).
61. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 276.
62. Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (London: Allen Lane, 2008).
63. Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 18, 54.
64. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162:3859 (December 13, 1968) 1243-8, available at http://science.sciencemag.org/content/162/3859/1243.full, accessed December 12, 2017.
65. Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 77, 122-3.
66. Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 107.
67. Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2017). As Shirkey puts it, "when it becomes simple to form groups, we get good and bad ones." Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 211.
68. Duncan J. Watts and Steven H. Strogatz, "Collective Dynamics of 'Small World' Networks," *Nature* #393 (June 4, 1998) 440-2.
69. Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 18.
70. Terranova, *Network Culture*, 51.
71. Terranova, *Network Culture*, 57.

72. Terranova, *Network Culture*, 100-30.
73. Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 136.
74. Morozov, *The Net Delusion*, 136.
75. Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity [2010] 2013) 41.
76. Brian Holmes, *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2009) 26, 31. See also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1980] 1987).
77. Brian Holmes, *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2008) 15.
78. Holmes, *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, 26.
79. Holmes, *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, 49.
80. Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).
81. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
82. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 22.
83. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 57.
84. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 111-12.
85. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 31.
86. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 59.
87. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 31.
88. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 88.
89. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIV: The Logic of Phantasy, 1966-1967*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, available at www.lacan.ireland.com, accessed December 12, 2017.
90. See Rodrigo Ochigame and James Holston, "Filtering Dissent: Social Media and Land Struggles in Brazil," *New Left Review* #99 (May/June 2016), available at https://newleftreview.org/II/99/rodrigo-ochigame-james-holston-filtering-dissent, accessed December 12, 2017.
91. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, [1973] 1998) 29. See also Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1990] 2007).
92. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 92.
93. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: Joyce and the Sinthome, 1975-1976*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, available at www.lacaninireland.com, accessed December 12, 2017.
94. See for instance Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London: Verso, 2012) and Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party* (London: Verso, 2016). For a counterpoint to Dean's totalizing politics of communist commitment, see Slavoj Žižek, "The Fetish of the Party," in *The*

Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume Two, eds. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006) 67-93.

95. Dean, *Blog Theory*, 116-18. The collective BFAMFAPhD report that in the U.S., the combined student loan balance exceeds $1.2 trillion.
96. Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
97. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 228. See also Andrew Ross, *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).
98. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 294.
99. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 198, 241.
100. See for instance, Dallas Smythe, "The Consumer's Stake in Radio and Television," *The Quarterly of Radio, Film and Television* 6:2 (1951) 109-28, and Smythe, "On the Political Economy of Communications," *Journal of Communication* 27:1 (1977) 198-202.
101. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 93. The notion of the prosumer, in which consumers are replaced by people who produce their own goods and services, is described in Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave: The Classic Study of Tomorrow* (New York: Bantam, 1980).
102. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 261.
103. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 110-11. See also Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999) and Dyer-Witheford, "Digital Labour, Species Being and the Global Worker," *Ephemera* 10:3-4 (2010) 484-503.
104. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 127-30.
105. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 141.
106. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 147.
107. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 326-33.
108. Marx cited in Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*, 327.
109. Thomas Brockelman, *Žižek and Heidegger: The Question Concerning Techno-Capitalism* (London: Continuum, 2008) 40.
110. From Žižek, *The Parallax View* (2006) cited in Brockelman, *Žižek and Heidegger*, 41.

2. Against Cybernanthropy

1. Henri Lefebvre, *Position: Contre les technocrates* (Paris: Éditions Gonthier, 1967). The discussion of Lefebvre's book herein presents and paraphrases aspects of this untranslated work with the purpose of elucidating its relevance to the contemporary concept of networks.
2. See Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*, trans. John Sturrock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1940] 2009) and *Le Marxisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).
3. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, [1946] 1991)]. Lefebvre's dialectical conception of everyday life was reduced to the structuralism he otherwise rejected by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

4. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, [1974] 1991). An example of the continuing relevance of *The Production of Space* is David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012).
5. See for example, Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998) and Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
6. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989) and Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000).
7. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
8. Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Toronto: Vintage, 2000). See also the critique of culture jamming in Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004).
9. On the reception of Badiou's work, see Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
10. Henri Lefebvre, *Le Temps des méprises* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1975) 55.
11. On this see the two volumes of Lefebvre's autobiography, *La Somme et le reste* (Paris: Editions NEF, 1959).
12. Postmodern appropriations of Lefebvre include, for example, Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces: Places and Memory in Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) and Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000).
13. One of the most compelling readers of Lefebvre is the literary theorist Kristin Ross. See for example, Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995) and *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2015).
14. Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1999) 126.
15. Lefebvre, *Position*, 16.
16. Lefebvre, *Position*, 25.
17. Lefebvre, *Position*, 45.
18. Lefebvre, *Position*, 47.
19. See Alain Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, [2007] 2008) 13.
20. Lefebvre, *Position*, 69.
21. Lefebvre, *Position*, 81. Translations from *Position* by the author.
22. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970) 387.
23. Lefebvre, *Position*, 86.

24. Lefebvre, *Position*, 93.
25. Darin Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004) 18.
26. Slavoj Žižek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!" in Butler et al., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, 94.
27. Žižek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!" 108.
28. Wu Ming, "How to Tell a Revolution from Everything Else," in Marc James Léger, ed. *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) 72.
29. Barney, *The Network Society*, 43.
30. Brian Holmes, "Unleashing the Collective Phantoms," in *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering* (Williamsburg: Autonomedia, 2008) 26.
31. "Just as the social productive power of labour that is developed by co-operation appears to be the productive power of capital, so co-operation itself, contrasted with the process of production carried on by isolated independent workers, or even by small masters, appears to be a specific form of the capitalist process of production." While Marx held that the co-presence of co-operating workers puts pressure on capitalists to overcome increasing worker resistance, the conditions of cooperation alter considerably in the context of the social factory, as addressed in the first chapter. See Karl Marx, "Co-operation," *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, [1867] 1976) 453.
32. Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2014) 248.
33. See Gabriella Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous* (London: Verso, 2015) 3.
34. See Slavoj Žižek, "Some Politically Incorrect Reflections on Urban Violence in Paris and New Orleans and Related Matters," in BAVO, ed. *Urban Politics Now: Re-Imagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2007) 12-29. Joshua Clover provides a theory of the riot in a post-strike world of precarity in *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings* (London: Verso, 2016). The counterpoint to Clover is Badiou's distinction between immediate, latent and historical riots in *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, [2011] 2012) 21-63.
35. Lefebvre, *Position*, 126.
36. Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012) 6.
37. Lefebvre, *Position*, 132.
38. Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1990] 2007).
39. Lefebvre, *Position*, 140.
40. See mashmedialive, "Grand Gangnam Style Welcome for New Employees," *YouTube* (March 6, 2013), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae8Vv9Iplok, accessed December 12, 2017.
41. Lefebvre, *Position*, 145.
42. Lefebvre, *Position*, 177-8.

43. Lefebvre, *Position*, 183.
44. On the theory of such artificial worlds as "degenerate utopias," see Louis Marin, *Utopics: Spatial Play*, trans. Robert A. Vollrath (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1984).
45. Cited in Yates McKee, *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* (London: Verso, 2016) 240.
46. Lefebvre, *Position*, 183-6.
47. Lefebvre, *Position*, 186.
48. Benjamin Peters, "Prologue," *How Not to Network a Nation: The Uneasy History of the Soviet Internet* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016) available at http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6689/5482, accessed December 12, 2017.
49. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 6.
50. Geert Lovink, *Social Media Abyss: Critical Internet Cultures and the Force of Negation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) 11.
51. Lefebvre, *Position*, 195.
52. Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) 4.
53. Lefebvre, *Position*, 222-3.
54. See Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004) and Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979* (Paris: Seuil/Galimard, 2004).
55. Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity, [2014] 2016).
56. Michael Scott Christofferson, "Foucault and New Philosophy: Why Foucault Endorsed André Glucksmann's *The Master Thinkers*," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 12. Gabriel Rockhill reports that the CIA had been very enthusiastic about the shift by *nouveaux philosophes* like Lévi and Glucksmann away from Marxism, and, in a recently released 1985 paper titled "France: The Defection of the Leftist Intellectuals," singled out Foucault as well as Lévi-Strauss as having contributed to the "critical demolition of Marxist influence in the social sciences." See Gabriel Rockhill, "The CIA Reads French Theory: On the Intellectual Labor of Dismantling the Cultural Left," *The Philosophical Salon* (February 28, 2017), available http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/the-cia-reads-french-theory-on-the-intellectual-labor-of-dismantling-the-cultural-left/, accessed December 12, 2017.
57. See Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société. Cours au Collège de France, 1975-1976* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1997).
58. See Henri Lefebvre, *De L'État, Tome I. L'État dans le monde moderne* (Paris: 10/8, 1976); Lefebvre, *De L'État, Tome II: De Hegel à Mao par Staline (La théorie 'Marxiste' de l'état* (Paris: 10/8, 1976); Lefebvre, *De L'État, Tome III. Le Mode de production étatique* (Pris: 10/8, 1977).
59. Michael C. Behrent, "Liberalism without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976-1979," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 26.
60. Behrent, "Liberalism without Humanism," 30-1.

61. Foucault, from *Il faut défendre la société*, cited in Behrent, "Liberalism without Humanism," 41.
62. Jean-Loup Amselle, "Michel Foucault and the Spiritualization of Philosophy," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 167.
63. Daniel Zamora, "Foucault, the Excluded, and the Neoliberal Erosion of the State," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 65-6. There is a similar tendency in Clover's racialization of riots as well as in Franco Berardi's somewhat 'rightist' perception that the "oppressed and exploited of the world" are an "army of avengers" destined to an "apocalyptic endgame" of revenge, since, as he puts it, "debts are to be paid." He writes: "They have nothing to lose except their life and they are willing to give their life away in exchange for revenge…" Despite these fatalistic assumptions, Berardi makes the correct assessment, in my view, that "[o]nly the emergence of a third actor, the conscious solidarity among workers beyond the limits of nations may dispel the final catastrophe." See Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "Back to Zimmerwald: Rethinking Internationalism," *Crisis & Critique* 4:2 (November 2017) 58, available at http://crisiscritique.org/2017/november/Franco%20Berardi.pdf, accessed December 12, 2017.
64. Zamora, "Foucault, the Excluded, and the Neoliberal Erosion of the State," 73.
65. Mitchell Dean, "Foucault, Ewald, Neoliberalism, and the Left," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 86-97.
66. Loïc Wacquant, "Bourdieu, Foucault, and the Penal State in the Neoliberal Era," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 114. From 1980 to 2016, the French prison population tripled in size and the U.S. prison population quadrupled in size, with the latter costing approximately $1 trillion annually. Due to the larger number of women in U.S. prisons, the incidence of foster care cases during this time period increased by 716 percent. Other costs of hyperincarceration include loss of social capital, financial loss and long-term psychological effects.
67. Dean, "Foucault, Ewald, Neoliberalism, and the Left," 107.
68. Jan Rehmann, "The Unfulfilled Promises of the Late Foucault and Foucauldian 'Governmentality Studies'," in Zamora and Behrent, eds. *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, 136, 146.
69. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).
70. Berardi, *The Uprising*, 7.
71. Berardi, *The Uprising*, 12.
72. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, trans. Robert Hurley (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [2014] 2015) 23.
73. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 104.
74. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 109.
75. The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 110-11.
76. Berardi, *The Uprising*, 14.
77. Berardi, *The Uprising*, 18.
78. Berardi, *The Uprising*, 96.

79. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and Marco Magagnoli, "Blu's Iconoclasm and the End of the Dada Century," e-flux *Journal* #73 (May 2016), available at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/blus-iconoclasm-and-the-end-of-the-dada-century/, accessed December 12, 2017.
80. Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008) 34.
81. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 371.
82. See John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2003) and Benjamin Noys, ed. *Communization and Its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2012).
83. See Antonio Negri, *Goodbye Mr. Socialism*, trans. Peter Thomas (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008).
84. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 348.
85. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 361.
86. Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (Toronto: Knopf, 2014).
87. Slavoj Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).
88. Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).
89. Feldner and Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 20.
90. Feldner and Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 24, 27.
91. Feldner and Vighi refer in this context to Žižek's arguments in *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality*, in *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 28.
92. Feldner and Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 38.
93. Žižek cited in Feldner and Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 59.
94. Feldner and Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault*, 47.
95. Fabio Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics: Surplus, Subtraction, Sublimation* (London: Continuum, 2010) 64.
96. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 67.
97. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 98.
98. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 100.
99. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 104.
100. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 105.
101. Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 106.
102. From Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, cited in Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 107.
103. From Žižek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, cited in Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics*, 111.
104. Eric London, "Trump names opponent of public schools to head Department of Education," *World Socialist Web Site* (November 26, 2016), available at http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/11/26/devo-n26.html, accessed December 12, 2017.
105. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: Joyce and the Sinthome, 1975-1976*, trans. Cormac Gallagher, available at www.lacaninireland.com, accessed December 12, 2017.

3. The Avant Garde as Capitalist Realism

1. Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture: The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015) 7.
2. Gordon-Nesbitt, *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture*, 18.
3. For studies that apply the notion of networks to literary and cultural studies, see Jonathan H. Grossman, *Charles Dickens's Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). See also Miguel Angel Medina, "Network Theory and Its Applications in Arts Practice and History of Arts," *Rupkatha Journal On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 6:3 (2014) 16-26, available at http://rupkatha.com/network-theory-applications-arts-practice-history-arts/, accessed December 12, 2017.
4. See as an example of transcultural translation, Katarzyna Kosmala, "Temporality and Alteration of Social Boundaries in the Making of an Art Installation," *Journal of Creative Industries* 4:1 (2011) 53-69.
5. See Aras Ozgun, "Creative Industries: Neo-Liberalism as Mass Deception," in Marc James Léger, ed. *Culture and Contestation in the New Century* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2011) 105-124. See also Marc James Léger, "The Non-Productive Role of the Artist: The Creative Industries in Canada," *Third Text* 24:5 (September 2010) 557-70.
6. David Cottington, *The Avant-Garde: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
7. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 4.
8. For an account of the origins of the idea of the avant garde, see Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism," *Praxis* #6 (1982) 38-70.
9. *The Communist Manifesto* cited in Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 6.
10. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 7.
11. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 8.
12. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 18.
13. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 18.
14. Cottington otherwise makes a distinction between the bohemian and the avant-gardist since the former does not benefit from a stable professional network. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 34-6. See also Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).
15. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 19-20. See also Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).
16. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 39-43.
17. On the link between poetry and communism, see Alain Badiou, *The Age of Poets, And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2014).
18. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 71.
19. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 44.
20. The interest in showing the interconnections among art cities is part of a growing trend

in cultural theory towards everything "global." On this subject, see Marc James Léger, "Art and Art History After Globalization," *Third Text* 26:5 (September 2012) 515-27.

21. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 50.
22. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 68.
23. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 93.
24. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 99.
25. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 110.
26. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 116.
27. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 118.
28. UNESCO, for example, now provides guidelines on how to measure the economic contribution of the culture industries to sustainable development and employment. See UNESCO, *Data for the Sustainable Development Goals*, available at http://uis.unesco.org, accessed March 21, 2018. World Creative, an offshoot of the French NGO, International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers, sponsors a site called 'Cultural Times – The First Global Map of Cultural and Creative Industries,' which establishes how cultural and creative economies fuel economic growth. Available at http://www.worldcreative.org, accessed Marc 21, 2018. Both sites define the value of art in terms of dollars generated and employment.
29. Cottington, *The Avant-Garde*, 122.
30. Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009) 141.
31. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: O Books, 2009) 17.
32. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 2.
33. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 7.
34. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 9.
35. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 13.
36. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 15.
37. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 32-3.
38. Mark Fisher's suicide in January 2017, after years of struggling with depression, make his writing on these issues all the more poignant. For an overview of Fisher's work, see Owen Hatherley, "'Writing of a sort that wasn't supposed to exist anymore': Mark Fisher Remembered (1868-2017)," *Ceasefire* (January 17, 2017), available at https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/writing-sort-supposed-exist-anymore-mark-fisher-remembered-1968-2017/, accessed December 12, 2017.
39. Benjamin Piekut, "Introduction: New Questions for Experimental Music," in Piekut, ed. *Tomorrow Is the Question: New Directions in Experimental Music Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014) 1.
40. Benjamin Piekut, "Indeterminacy, Free Improvisation, and the Mixed Avant-Garde: Experimental Music in London, 1965-1975," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67:3 (2014) 769-823.
41. Piekut, "Indeterminacy, Free Improvisation, and the Mixed Avant-Garde," 771. Piekut's network model of music could be said to invert the sociology of mediation that has been

proposed by Antoine Hennion. According to Hennion, mediation in music not only allows us to understand the determinations of art, from social context to political economy, but also permits a "positive analysis" of musical performance and reception, from gestures and bodies to stages and media. Hennion thus proposes a pragmatist-constructionist theory of musical specificity that is defined in terms of mediation and that contrasts with a social constructionism that seeks to denaturalize and deconstruct. How it is that the works of art that Hennion addresses can escape the mediation of capital, however, is another matter. Pikeut takes a step further than Hennion, pushing the positivization of cultural analysis to its presumed total demystification, proposing an immanentist collapse of ontology and heteronomy rather than a dialectical mediation of ontology as epistemological limitation (ideology). The elimination of the dichotomy between aesthetic ontology and worldly heteronomy into a network model of ontological multiplicity could be considered, in Hennion's words, "the price to pay for a radicalism that did its job well." For both Hegel and Lacan, who are more compatible with Bourdieu's sociology of culture than Hennion, the thing in itself, whether conceived as agential or not, is an enigma at best. See Antoine Hennion, "From ANT to Pragmatism: A Journey with Bruno Latour at the CSI [Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation]," *New Literary History* #47 (2016) 289; and Hennion, "Music and Mediation: Toward a New Sociology of Music," in Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton, eds. *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 84.

42. Piekut, "Indeterminacy, Free Improvisation, and the Mixed Avant-Garde," 771.
43. Piekut, "Tomorrow Is the Question," 7.
44. The Starbucks ideology is discussed by Žižek in the film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (USA, Sophie Fiennes, 2012).
45. Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008) 37.
46. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 40.
47. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 42. See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
48. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 42.
49. Benjamin Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques," *Twentieth-Century Music* (May 2014) 1-25.
50. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 1.
51. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 2.
52. The MoMA interactive map for the exhibition *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925* is available at http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/inventingabstraction/?page=connections, accessed December 12, 2017.
53. Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (New York: New York University Press, [1981] 1993. Wolff also describes this structure/agency dilemma in terms of the problems of "sociological imperialism" and "postmodern nihilism" in Janet Wolff, "Against Sociological Imperialism: The Limits of Sociology in the Aesthetic Sphere," in Ronald W. Neperud, ed. *Context, Content, and Community in Art Education: Beyond Postmodernism* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995) 128-40. For a critique of subjective judgement, which

Wolff addresses as part of the solution to relativism and absolutism, see my emphasis on the Žižekian notion of belief in Marc James Léger, "Whose Excellence? Our Excellence!" *FUSE* 33:3 (Summer 2010) 24-6. See also Robert Pfaller, *Interpassivity: The Aesthetics of Delegated Enjoyment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

54. Shane Ferro, "Officially, Your Employer Can't Force You To Be Happy At Work," *The Huffington Post* (May 6, 2016), available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/officially-your-boss-cant-force-you-to-be-happy-at-work_us_572cb632e4b016f378957ceb, accessed December 12, 2017. See also Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).
55. David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (New York: Melville House, 2015) 110.
56. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 2.
57. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 3.
58. Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*, 116.
59. Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*, 55, 120.
60. See Marc James Léger, "Henri Lefebvre and the Moment of the Aesthetic," in Andrew Hemingway, ed. *Marxism and the History of Art: From William Morris to the New Left* (London: Pluto Press, 2006) 143-60.
61. "The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions. It is possible to step down from the sovereign viewpoint from which objectivist idealism orders the world … but without having to abandon to it the 'active aspect' of apprehension of the world by reducing knowledge to a mere recording. To do this, one has to situate oneself *within* 'real activity as such,' that is, in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle. One has to escape from the realism of the structure, to which objectivism, a necessary stage in breaking with primary experience and constructing the objective relationships, necessarily leads when it hypostatizes these relations by treating them as realities already constituted outside the history of the group – without falling back into subjectivism, which is quite incapable of giving an account of the necessity of the social world." Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1980] 1990) 52.
62. See Louise Burchill, "Translator's Preface," in Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity Press, [2010] 2013) xix.
63. Burchill, "Translator's Preface," viii.
64. Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 22.
65. Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 69.
66. Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 77.
67. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 3. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social:*

An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

68. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (216), cited in Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, *Žižek Beyond Foucault* (New York: Palgrave, 2007) 45-6.
69. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 76.
70. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 18.
71. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 19.
72. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 19.
73. Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History," 20.
74. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 5.
75. See Slavoj Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere: A Critique of Object Oriented Ontology," in Agon Hamza and Frank Ruda, eds. *Slavoj Žižek and Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 177-92; formerly available at http://mariborchan.si/text/articles/slavoj-zizek/objects-objects-everywhere/.
76. On the question of noise in this "de-ontologization" framework, see Amy Ireland, "Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-Garde" (2013), available at https://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde, accessed December 12, 2017.
77. Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere." Žižek also disagrees with Graham Harman's object-oriented philosophy, which is concerned to describe the world of reality that is inaccessible to human cognition, or that rejects the division between nature and thought, object and subject. Žižek's rejoinder is that this impenetrability of reality is its essential characteristic as something that is flawed, antagonistic or incomplete. Reality simply does not exist as a positive, fully knowable realm. In the terms of quantum physics, as Žižek puts it, indeterminacy is not simply a problem attributable to the human perception of reality. Further, subjectivity is paradoxical as the lack of being or as a structural deadlock. The paradox of subject is that it is an object that is unavailable to itself. The surplus of non-knowing is embodied in a supplementary *objet a*. This means that humans are never simply objects. With regard to the claim that objects cannot be reduced to their relations, Žižek agrees but adds to this the possibility that relations can also lead to excess. A musical score, we could say, exists as music when it is performed or discussed in the terms of musical performance and reception. If the score is chewed up by a dog, like the poetry book of the main character in Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*, then its significance as a score is immaterial. Through a kind of negative ontology, the "in itself" of the score is defined by that which is relevant to the world of music, which is subject to change. The score was not produced to provide amusement or nutrition for dogs. Of course Jarmusch is making metaphorical use of the image of the "dog" devouring Paterson's poetry – the dog standing in for viewers who might be hip to his film. Insofar as speculative realism would argue that the dog/poetry relationship is not less important than the human/poetry relationship, since, "a dog encounters the world in a specifically dog-like way" (Hamilton), psychoanalysis would counter that this matter of uncertainty is essential to the state of subjectivity as well as reality. From the point of view of Lacanian-Žižekian theory, both the dog and poetry, as *objet a*, are subject to the ontological failures of symbolization, with this epistemological impossibility being transposed onto the Freudian "thing" itself

as a pre-transcendental Real. We no more know the reality of dogs than the absolute significance of poetry. Poetry, film or music, just like dogs and other kinds of "objects," function through an "ideological quilting" of signification, which, as Badiou argues, creates worlds of meaning through events and truth procedures. Music, however, unlike dogs, is part of the realm of truths. The uncanny appearance of animals might be a subject of art, but the care and fate of animals, as well as the rest of nature in the age of the Capitalocene, is a matter of politics. See Grant Hamilton, *The World of Failing Machines: Speculative Realism and Literature* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2016) 49-50. See also the posting by SCI-Arc Media Archive, "Slavoj Žižek and Graham Harman in conversation, moderated by Anna Neimark (March 1, 2017)," *YouTube* (March 1, 2017), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdGeJWJsxto, accessed December 12, 2017.

78. Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere."
79. Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere."
80. Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere."
81. Žižek, "Objects, Objects Everywhere."
82. D. Graham Burnett, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," *October* #155 (Winter 2016) 20.
83. Andrew Cole, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," 23-4.
84. Cole, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," 24.
85. Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," *Existenz* 8:2 (Fall 2013) 30.
86. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George DiGiovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [c.1817] 2010) 536.
87. John Roberts, "Art and Its Negations," *Third Text* 24:3 (May 2010) 290.
88. Roberts, "Art and Its Negations," 297.
89. Slavoj Žižek, "On Alain Badiou and *Logiques des mondes*," *Lacan.com* (2007), available at http://www.lacan.com/zizbadman.htm, accessed December 12, 2017.
90. Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013).
91. Readings cited in Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, xii.
92. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, xii.
93. Massumi cited in Žižek, "On Alain Badiou and *Logiques des mondes*."
94. Gordon-Nesbitt, *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture*, 204.

4. Sociality and the New Organizations

1. Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Rebel Press, [1967] 2001).
2. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum* 44:6 (2006) 178-83. See also Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du réel, [1998] 2002) and Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
3. Key texts include: Suzanne Lacy, ed. *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long*

Twentieth Century (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2007), Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012) and Amber Hickey, *A Guidebook of Alternative Nows* (Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, 2012).

4. I leave aside some of Vaneigem's other themes since contemporary conditions have fulfilled many of his wishes, even if in contradictory ways: the critique of boredom, the emphasis on youthful vitalism, spontaneity, adventurism, participation, play in work, creativity in work, etc.
5. Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).
6. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 18.
7. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 29.
8. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 109.
9. Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher, "Introduction," *Public* #45 (2012) 6.
10. Drobnick and Fisher, "Introduction," 6.
11. Drobnick and Fisher, "Introduction," 7.
12. Cayley Sorochan, "Flash Mobs, Spectatorship and the Collapse of Belief in the Critical Public Sphere," *Topia* #29 (Spring 2013) 186.
13. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 129.
14. See Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009) 99.
15. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 219.
16. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 172.
17. McKenzie Wark argues that the integrated and diffuse spectacle have melded into a new instance of organized disintegration. See McKenzie Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out of the 20th Century* (London: Verso, 2013).
18. For an art world exception to this, see Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, *Crisis to Insurrection: Notes on the Ongoing Collapse* (Wivenhow: Minor Compositions, 2015).
19. For an art world focus on political economy, see Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, eds. *It's the Political Economy, Stupid: The Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory* (London: Pluto Books, 2013).
20. Chris Kraus, *Where Art Belongs* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011) 12.
21. Kim cited in Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, 18-19.
22. Kim cited in Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, 37.
23. Kim cited in Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, 41.
24. Jacuzzi cited in Kraus, *Where Art Belongs*, 42.
25. Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 7.
26. Sholette, *Dark Matter*, 4.
27. Kim now writes music and teaches early music notation.
28. Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013) xii.
29. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 2.
30. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 5.

31. Pascal Gielen, "The Art Scene: An Ideal Production Unit for Economic Exploitation?" *Open* #17 (2009) 14.
32. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 45, 48.
33. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 17.
34. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 71.
35. On this subject, see Rosika Desnoyers, David Tomas and Marc James Léger, *Millet Matrix: Contemporary Art, Collaboration and Curatorial Praxis* (Zürich: On Curating, 2015).
36. Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 118.
37. Geert Lovink, *Social Media Abyss: Critical Internet Cultures and the Force of Negation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).
38. Lovink, *Social Media Abyss*, 10.
39. Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette, *The Interventionists: Users' Guide for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (North Adams/Cambridge: MASS MoCA/The MIT Press, 2004) and Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (New York/Cambridge: Creative Time Books/The MIT Press, 2012).
40. Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2015).
41. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).
42. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 9.
43. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 12. In a 2017 interview, Thompson, who is now the Artistic Director of the Philadelphia Contemporary, refers to the "commercial embrace" of social practice art, which he says is neither good or bad, simply a reality and a sign that "things have certainly changed." He adds that difficult politics are local and that abstract politics around radical ideas do not hold anyone accountable, and moreover, when speaking of the left, no one knows what they are talking about. He says, arguing for differences between the United States, India and indigenous communities, that to speak of internationalism "assumes everyone's in the Left and also that if you are in the Left, we're speaking the same language." See Hrag Vartanian, "Curator Nato Thonpson on Politics and the State of Social Practice Art," *Hyperallergic* (October 25, 2017), available at https://hyperallergic.com/407599/curator-nato-thompson-on-politics-and-the-state-of-social-practice-art/, accessed December 12, 2017. Thompson's localism echoes the words of Barack Obama, who, in response to the 2009 G20 protests in Pittsburgh, stated: "focusing on concrete, local, immediate issues that have an impact on people's lives is what really makes a difference and […] having protests about abstractions [like] global capitalism […] is not really going to make a difference." See also Greg Sharzer, *No Local: Why Small-Scale Alternatives Won't Change the World* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012).
44. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 131.
45. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 72.
46. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 77.
47. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 46.

48. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 88, 164.
49. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 104.
50. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 104.
51. Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso, 2012) 31-4.
52. On this subject see Imre Szeman, "Imagining the Future: Globalization, Postmodernism and Criticism," *Frame: Journal of Literary Studies* 19:2 (2006) 16-30; available at http://www.tijdschriftframe.nl/19-2-globalisering/imre-szeman-imagining-the-future-globalization-postmodernism-and-criticism/, accessed December 12, 2017.
53. Matthew Flisfeder, "The Entrepreneurial Subject and the Objectivization of the Self in Social Media," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 114:3 (July 2015) 566.
54. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1984) 10.
55. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 49.
56. Flisfeder, "The Entrepreneurial Subject and the Objectivization of the Self in Social Media," 554.
57. See Pascal Gielen, "Pascal Gielen," *RWM Ràdio Web MACBA* #218 (2015), available at http://rwm.macba.cat/en/sonia/pascal-gielen-podcast/capsula, accessed December 12, 2017.
58. BAVO (Gideon Boie & Matthias Pauwels), "Neoliberalism with Dutch Characteristics: The Big Fix-Up of the Netherlands and the Practice of Embedded Cultural Activism," in Rosi Braidotti, Charles Esche and Maria Hlavajova, eds. *Citizens and Subjects: The Netherlands, For Example* (Utrecht/Zürich: BAK/JRP|Ringier, 2007) 51-63.
59. BAVO, "Always Choose the Worst Option: Artistic Resistance and the Strategy of Over-Identification," in BAVO, eds. *Cultural Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007) 20.
60. BAVO, "The Spectre of the Avant-Garde: Contemporary Reassertions of the Programme of Subversion in Cultural Production," *Andere Sinema* #176 (2006) 25, 29.
61. BAVO, "The Spectre of the Avant-Garde," 31-2.
62. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 161.
63. Slavoj Žižek, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real," in Žižek, *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume 2*, eds. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006) 268. Žižek elsewhere makes the important observation that pragmatism is fine for theory, but not good enough for praxis since, in most cases, pragmatism implies a set of implicit (capitalist) principles and rules that regulate practice. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Incontinence of the Void: Economico-Philosophical Spandrels* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017) 182-4.
64. Geert Lovink, "Before Building the Avant-Garde of the Commons," *Open* (November 1, 2016), available at http://www.onlineopen.org/before-building-the-avant-garde-of-the-commons, accessed December 12, 2017.
65. Lovink, "Before Building the Avant-Garde of the Commons." See Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek, eds. *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010), Slavoj Žižek, ed. *The Idea of Communism 2: The New York Conference* (London: Verso, 2013) and Alex

Taeng-Gwang Lee and Slavoj Žižek, ed. *The Idea of Communism 3: The Seoul Conference* (London: Verso, 2014). Autonomist approaches to communist political organization are available in Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri, *New Lines of Alliance, New Spaces of Liberty*, trans. Michael Ryan et al., ed. Stevphen Shukaitis (London and New York, Williamsburgh: Minor Compositions, Autonomedia and MayFly Books, [1985/1990] 2010) and Richard Gilman-Opalsky, *Precarious Communism: Manifest Mutations, Manifesto Detourned* (Wivenhoe, NY: Minor Compositions, 2014). For Marxist and social democratic approaches to political organization, see David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), Sam Gindin, "Unmaking Global Capitalism: Nine Things to Know About Organizing in the Belly of the Beast," *Jacobin* (June 2014), available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/06/unmaking-global-capitalism/, accessed December 12, 2017, and Erik Olin Wright, "How to Think About (And Win) Socialism," *Jacobin* (March 27, 2016), available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/04/erik-olin-wright-real-utopias-capitalism-socialism/, accessed December 12, 2017.

66. Geert Lovink, *Social Media Abyss: Critical Internet Cultures and the Force of Negation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) 175, 186, 190.
67. Lovink, *Social Media Abyss*, 195, and Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011) 160.
68. Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause*, 165.
69. Michael Hardt, "The Leadership Problem," lecture delivered at the European Graduate School, 2014, *YouTube* (January 27, 2015), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whwa_nIPXdM, accessed December 12, 2017.
70. Contrary to Hardt's claim, Žižek often insists that the days of state communist parties are over and that the best we can hope for today are small changes within the ruling order that indicate its ideological inconsistencies and that create avenues for emancipation. Žižek's work is best when it disturbs dogmas, but he often vacillates between endorsing welfare state policies and proposing that welfarism is also a thing of the past. However, if Žižek is often concerned to dispel the left's illusions, he is not less critical of liberal ideology. He has more recently advocated leadership in the form of vanguards with bureaucratic socialism as a first stage towards emancipation from capitalism. See for instance Crisis and Critique (editors), "An Interview with Slavoj Žižek: The Belated Actuality of Lenin," *Crisis and Critique* 4:2 (2017) 428-48, available at http://crisiscritique.org/2017/november/An%20Interview%20With%20Slavoj%20Zizek.pdf, accessed December 12, 2017.
71. Lovink, *Social Media Abyss*, 2.
72. Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted," *The New Yorker* (October 4, 2010), available at http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell, accessed December 12, 2017. Along similar lines to Gladwell's article, see also Astra Taylor's critique of activism in favour of organization in "Against Activism," *The Baffler* #30 (2016), available at http://thebaffler.com/salvos/against-activism, accessed December 12, 2017.

73. Hardt, "The Leadership Problem."
74. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
75. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 103.
76. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 222.
77. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 129.
78. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 129.
79. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 143-5.
80. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 188.
81. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 194.
82. Rodrigo Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless: Collective Action After Networks* (London and Leuphana: Mute Books and PML Books, 2014).
83. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 8.
84. Jeffrey S. Juris, "Anarchism, or The Cultural Logic of Networking," in Randall Amster et al., eds. *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (London: Routledge, 2009) 214, 222. See also Jeffrey S. Juris, "Networked Social Movements: Global Movements for Global Justice," in Manuel Castells, ed. *The Network Society: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (Cheltenham/Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2004) 341-62.
85. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 11.
86. W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics," *Information, Communication & Society* 15:5 (June 2012) 754; Alexandra Segerberg and W. Lance Bennett, "Social Media and the Organization of Collective Action: Using Twitter to Explore the Ecologies of Two Climate Change Protests," *The Communication Review* 14:3 (2011) 31.
87. Bennett and Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action," 755-7.
88. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 4.
89. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 5-9, 135. See also Evgeny Morozov, "The Brave New World of Slacktivism," *Foreign Policy* (May 19, 2009), available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-new-world-of-slacktivism/, accesseed December 8, 2017.
90. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 15.
91. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 30. On the subject of Occupy Wall Street, and whether or not physical space and face-to-face interaction played a more important role than online communication and virtual platforms, see Marisol Sandoval's review of Christian Fuchs's *OccupyMedia!* in "Demanding and Defining Alternative Media," Heathwood Institute and Press (August 29, 2014), available at http://www.heathwoodpress.com/demanding-defining-alternative-media/, accessed December 12, 2017. See also Christian Fuchs, *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014). Fuchs's book presents the results of a survey that examines the ways that Occupy activists perceive the role of social media in efforts to mobilize protests and occupations. The import of his book is that social media are less significant to social movements than scholars like Manuel Castells and Paul Mason have suggested.

92. The statement was published in Aaron Morrison, "Exclusive: Black Lives Matter issues a statement on Trump's election," *Mic* (November 15, 2016), available at https://mic.com/articles/159496/exclusive-black-lives-matter-issues-a-statement-on-trump-s-election#.2egD6HmiM, accessed December 12, 2017.
93. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, [1867] 1976) 342. On the ways in which class conflict in the U.S. has been overshadowed by ethnic and religious conflict, and also how violence is the U.S. tends to not be radical but emerges rather as citizen-versus-citizen violence, often encouraged by establishment elites against abolitionists, religious groups, radicals, labour organizers, racial minorities and ideological minorities, see Richard Hofstadter, "Reflections on Violence in the United States," (1970) in *The Baffler* #28 (July 2015), available at http://thebaffler.com/ancestors/reflections-violence-united-states, accessed December 12, 2017. Hofstadter's essay does not make the case for anti-capitalist revolution, however, but rather makes the point that most social reforms in American history – child labour laws, wage-hour regulation, industrial safety, workers' compensation, collective bargaining, social security, medicare – were brought about through non-violent militancy, education and through official political channels. For an analysis of the ways in which, under capitalist social relations, questions of race and gender exploitation obscure questions of class exploitation, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
94. See also Jeffrey S. Juris, "The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* #597 (January 2005) 203.
95. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 156. Henri Lefebvre, *The Social Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, [1974] 1991) 44.
96. Juris argues that in the case of the Occupy movement, an organizational network logic allowed OWS to remain sustainable in its post-eviction stage, which implies that the "logic of aggregation" around public spaces, as in the case of OWS, cannot be neatly separated from the "logic of networks" of the previous wave of global justice activism. Juris argues for a certain advantage to the organizational logic of networks, which in the case of anti-globalization networks, represents greater (anti-capitalist) political cohesion than the Occupy movements that were based on crowds of aggregated individuals who had very different political impulses, from populism to libertarianism. See Jeffrey S. Juris, "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation," *American Ethnologist* 39:2 (2012) 261, 273.
97. Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets*, 10, 41-2. See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).
98. Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry* #32 (Spring 2006) 553.
99. Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," 555.
100. See for instance, Slavoj Žižek, "More Alienation, Please! A Critique of Cultural Violence," lecture delivered at New York University, October 8, 2015, *YouTube* (October 9, 2015), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2n6S62Ir5M, accessed

December 12, 2017. See also Žižek's speech at Occupy Wall Street, October 9, 2011, where he said: "We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal time. Will there be any changes then?" Žižek's speech at OWS is available at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v014/14.4S.zizek.html, accessed December 12, 2017.

101. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 27.
102. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 31.
103. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 34-5.
104. Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless*, 40.
105. Lovink, "Before Building the Avant-Garde of the Commons."
106. Gabriella Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous* (London: Verso, 2014).
107. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 3.
108. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 45.
109. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 291.
110. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 126. See also Molly Sauter, *The Coming Swarm: DDoS Actions, Hacktivism, and Civil Disobedience on the Internet* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).
111. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 373.
112. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy*, 175-6.
113. Neil Sutherland, Christopher Land and Steffan Böhm, "Anti-Leaders(hip) in Social Movement Organizations: The Case of Autonomous Grassroots Groups," *Organization* 21:6 (2014) 759.
114. Sutherland, Land and Böhm, "Anti-Leaders(hip) in Social Movement Organizations," 764.
115. Todd Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion: The Rise of the Cyber Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014) 3.
116. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 7.
117. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 23.
118. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 114.
119. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 138.
120. Wolfson, *Digital Rebellion*, 100.
121. Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012) 46.
122. Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to the Future* (London: Penguin, 2015) e-book, 247.
123. Mason, *Postcapitalism*, 19.
124. Mason, *Postcapitalism*, 23.
125. Mason, *Postcapitalism*, 27.
126. Mason, *Postcapitalism*, 299.
127. Mason, *Postcapitalism*, 373.
128. David Graeber, "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs," *Strike!* (August 17, 2013), available at http://strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/, accessed December 12, 2017.

129. The phrase "Internet of Things" is derived from Neil Gershenfeld, Raffi Krikorian and Danny Cohen, "The Internet of Things," *Scientific American* 291:4 (October 2004) 76-81.
130. Mason cites in this regard the work of Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).
131. Lazzarato and Alliez cast doubt on the possibility of making the market into the ultimate information processing cyborg. Rejecting the view that general intellect can lead to a "communism of capital," they rather consider that market self-regulation through feedback is subject to the indeterminacy of conflictual strategic relations: "Capital is not a structure or system; it is 'machine' and *war machine*, of which the economy, politics, technology, the State, the media, and so forth are only the articulations informed by strategic relations." See Maurizzio Lazzarato and Éric Alliez, "To Our Enemies," e-flux *Journal* #78 (2016), available at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/78/82697/to-our-enemies/, accessed December 12, 2017.
132. On the question of universal basic income, see Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (London: Verso, 2015). Based on the premise that automation will soon put a sizeable number of people out of work, Srnicek and Williams suggest that UBI should supplement rather than replace the welfare state and preserve the universality of services like health and education, that is, as opposed to transforming such services into consumer markets. The advantages of UBI include the reduction of poverty, the reduction of health care costs, better education retention, crime reduction, better quality of life and more free time, less state bureaucracy, a better business environment for start-ups, better conditions for continuing education and self-reinvention. UBI would also transform the asymmetries of power between employers and employees. UBI recognizes the fact that in a post-capitalist social factory and information economy everyone is already creating value. Costs for UBI could be covered by eliminating duplicate programmes, taxing the wealthy and fossil fuels, reducing military spending and reducing subsidies to industry and agriculture. Nathan Brown remarks that Srnicek and Williams' book has no real plan to end class relations because it does not do enough to address the problem of the valorization process and therefore the way that technology is bound up with social reproduction. Further to Brown's criticism, one might note the authors' view that any transition to an automation-led shift to UBI would be based on administration by state regimes, which hardly amounts to the political and economic independence of the working class on the basis of international socialism. David Harvey argues that unless UBI is embedded in a socialist social project, capitalism would almost inevitably find ways to recoup and siphon the gains that might come to citizens from a basic income. Further, Antonio Negri counters that full employment should be added to the "defensive measures" of universal basic income but that in any case, the turn to UBI indicates the close relation between productive forces and relations of production in the networks of social factory cooperation. Negri's assumption that basic income would create a "unitary terrain of struggle" that breaks with class fragmentation ignores the experience of corruption and cronyism in the former and existing communist countries. At best

it represents a shift away from neoliberal social policy. See Srnicek and Williams on UWE Philosophy & Post-Europe Project, "Automate Now? Robots, Jobs and Universal Basic Income: A Public Debate," *YouTube* (December 21, 2015), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShmbzDceuYo, accessed December 12, 2017; Nathan Brown, "Avoiding Communism: A Critique of Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' *Inventing the Future*," *Parrhesia* #25 (2016) 155-71; David Harvey and Robert Brenner, lecture at the CUNY Graduate Center, December 1, 21016, posted by Reading Marx's Capital with David Harvey as "What Now? The Roots of the Economic Crisis and the Way Forward," *YouTube* (December 8, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fhTG-m4Dbpw, accessed December 12, 2017; Antonio Negri, "Benoît Hamon and Universal Income," *Verso Blog* (February 27, 2017), available at http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3109-benoit-hamon-and-universal-income, accessed December 12, 2017.

133. Owen Hatherley, "One Click at a Time (Review of Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* and Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work*)," *London Review of Books* 38:13 (June 30, 2016), available at http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n13/owen-hatherley/one-click-at-a-time, accessed December 12, 2017. See also Yanis Varoufakis, "Basic Income Is a Necessity," lecture delivered at the Future of Work symposium, Gottlied Duttweiler Institure, 2016, DiEM25. official *YouTube* (May 12, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1e-OVU61mZE, accessed December 12, 2017.
134. Hillary Wainwright, "Review: *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* by Paul Mason," *Red Pepper* (October 2015), available at http://www.redpepper.org.uk/postcapitalism-a-guide-to-our-future-by-paul-mason/, accessed December 12, 2017.
135. Christian Fuchs, "Henryk Grossmann 2.0: A Critique of Paul Mason's Book *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*," *tripleC* 14:1 (2016) 233.
136. Fuchs, "Henryk Grossmann 2.0," 235.
137. Fuchs, "Henryk Grossmann 2.0," 238.
138. Marcuse cited in Fuchs, "Henryk Grossmann 2.0," 238.
139. Christian Fuchs, "Reflections on Todd Wolfson's *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*," *tripleC* 13:1 (2015) 163.
140. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (London/Toronto: Pluto Press/Between the Lines, 2015) 153.
141. Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat*, 166.
142. Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat*, 167.
143. Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat*, 196.
144. Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat*, 201-3.

5. A Networked Avant Garde?

1. Yates McKee, *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* (London: Verso, 2016).
2. McKee, *Strike Art*, 81.

3. Gabriel Rockhill, *Radical History and the Politics of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), eBook, 208.
4. Stevphen Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come: Aesthetics and Cultural Labor after the Avant-Garde* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).
5. McKee, *Strike Art*, 7.
6. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 4, 54.
7. McKee, *Strike Art*, 3. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).
8. McKee, *Strike Art*, 5. See also Andrew Ross, ed. *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor* (New York: OR Books, 2015)
9. McKee, *Strike Art*, 5-6, 9.
10. McKee, *Strike Art*, 10, 13.
11. McKee, *Strike Art*, 12.
12. McKee, *Strike Art*, 17.
13. On the difference between civil disobedience and direct action, see David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009).
14. McKee, *Strike Art*, 26.
15. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, x.
16. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, xviii-xix.
17. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 1-2.
18. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 4.
19. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 16.
20. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 6.
21. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 7.
22. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 7.
23. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 7-8.
24. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 15.
25. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 11.
26. Janet Wolff, "Aesthetics," in Tom Bottomore, ed. *Marxist Thought* (London: Blackwell Reference, 1983) 6.
27. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 12.
28. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 48.
29. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 31, 42.
30. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 70.
31. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 72.
32. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 89.
33. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 90.
34. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 74.
35. See Slavoj Žižek, "Slavoj Žižek – Masterclass 2: Is Surplus-Value Marx's Name for Surplus-Enjoyment?" lecture delivered at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities (April 19, 2016), available at http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2016/04/slavoj-zizek-masterclass-2-surplus-value-surplus-enjoyment-surplus-knowledge/, accessed

December 12, 2017.

36. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 80.
37. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1983) 54.
38. Karl Marx, "Supply and Demand," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976) 792-3.
39. Jim Stanford, *Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008).
40. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 231.
41. Lenin's law of the transformation of quantity into quality, and vice versa, not only raises the issue of the identity of opposites in dialectical thought, but also the question of incommensurability, in which case opposites need not be reconciled, but simply approached dialectically. What concerns us in a Marxist dialectic is the cultural or political content of the terms in any situation and their openness to a changing reality. However, to say this is not to oppose open and closed, which Jameson associates with the Cold War ideological paradigm and systems theory. See Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009).
42. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 252.
43. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 95. Concerning the political prospect of micro-practices in a world subsumed by capitalist social relations, Vishmidt, along with Anthony Iles, writes that "[a]ll this poses the contradiction that, rather than heralding communism, the enactment of micro-utopian experiments in spaces overdetermined by existing social relations dominated by abstract value comprise a measure of, not how close but, how far we are from the emergence of truly emancipatory practices." Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt, "Make Whichever You Find Work," *Variant* #41 (Spring 2011) 54.
44. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 97.
45. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 110-11, 114, 118, 135.
46. Shukaitis, *The Composition of Movements to Come*, 140.
47. McKee, *Strike Art*, 58.
48. On this subject, see McKenzie Wark's critique of Judith Butler's "corporeo-centrism" in "What the Performative Can't Perform," *Public Seminar* (June 8, 2016), available at http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/06/butler/, accessed December 12, 2017.
49. See also Yates McKee, "~~DEBT~~: Occupy, Postcontemporary Art, and the Aesthetics of Debt Resistance," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112:4 (Fall 2013) 784-803.
50. McKee, *Strike Art*, 88.
51. McKee, *Strike Art*, 94.
52. McKee, *Strike Art*, 92.
53. McKee, *Strike Art*, 110, 113.
54. McKee, *Strike Art*, 93.
55. Paulo Gerbado, *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012) 130, 132.

56. McKee, *Strike Art*, 102.
57. Raunig cited in McKee, *Strike Art*, 156.
58. McKee, *Strike Art*, 204.
59. McKee, *Strike Art*, 239.
60. See Gregory Sholette, "Strike Art: Let's Talk About Yates McKee's 2016 Book on Art, Activism & Occupy," *e-flux conversations* (April 2016): http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/strike-art-question-1-lets-talk-about-yates-mckees-2016-book-on-art-activism-occupy/3483; http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/strike-art-question-2-lets-talk-about-yates-mckees-2016-book-on-art-activism-occupy/3521; http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/strike-art-question-3-lets-talk-about-yates-mckees-2016-book-on-art-activism-occupy/3560, accessed December 12, 2017.
61. See McKenzie Wark, "Zuccotti Park, a Psychogeography," *Verso Blog* (October 6, 2011), available at http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/735-mckenzie-wark-zuccotti-park-a-psychogeography, accessed December 12, 2017.
62. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 1*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, [1947] 1991) 114.
63. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).
64. In response to this debate between identity politics and socialism, I would mention what Adolph Reed said about Angela Davis' critique of the Sanders campaign, which, like OWS, was not reluctant to acknowledge racial or gender inequality: "it's always good to know where people stand in relation to class struggle […] The responses to Sanders' critique throw into bolder relief just how fundamentally antiracism and other identitarian programs are not only the left wing of neoliberalism but active agencies in its imposition of a notion of the boundaries of the politically thinkable – sort of neoliberalism's intellectual and cultural border guard." See Daniel Zamora, "Bernie Sanders and the New Class Politics: An Interview with Adolph Reed," *Jacobin* (August 8, 2016), available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/bernie-sanders-black-voters-adolph-reed-trump-hillary/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=socialnetwork, accessed December 12, 2017.
65. On this subject, see Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture: Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Dick Pountain and David Robins, *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).
66. See Gregory Sholette, "A User Is Haunting the Art World. Book Review of Stephen Wright, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership* (2013)," *Art Journal* 74:1 (Spring 2015) 98-101.

6. There Is No Inside

1. For Benjamin, the author as producer focuses on the struggle between capitalism and proletariat. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (1939) in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, [1978] 220-38.

2. Pascal Gielen, "The Art Scene: An Ideal Production Unit for Economic Exploitation?" *Open* #17 (2009) 11.
3. Gielen, "The Art Scene," 14.
4. Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (London: Verso, 2016) eBook, 34.
5. Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013) vii.
6. See Ira Wells, "Why Canada's New Cultural Policy Will Be Terrible for the Arts: Turning Artists into Tech Entrepreneurs Is a Triumph of Silicon Valley Values," *The Walrus* (October 3, 2017), available at https://thewalrus.ca/why-canadas-new-cultural-policy-will-be-terrible-for-the-arts/#.WdQmn0b2A20.facebook, accessed December 12, 2017.
7. Dave Simpson, *The Fallen: Life In and Out of Britain's Most Insane Group* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008) 11.
8. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1970] 1997).
9. Groys, *In the Flow*, 76.
10. Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction: Between Two Revolutions," in Vladimir Lenin, *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2002) 3.
11. Žižek, "Introduction: Between Two Revolutions," 11.
12. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969-1970*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, [1991] 2007) 31.
13. Slavoj Žižek, "Afterword: Lenin's Choice," in Vladimir Lenin, *Revolution at the Gates*, 169.
14. Žižek, "Afterword: Lenin's Choice," 178.
15. Žižek, "Afterword: Lenin's Choice," 179.
16. Žižek, "Afterword: Lenin's Choice," 188.
17. Slavoj Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2014) 145.
18. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise*, 173.
19. See for instance, Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Diversity and Ignore Inequality* (New York: Holt, 2006).
20. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise*, 179.
21. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise*, 185.
22. Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014) 45.
23. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise*, 185.
24. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 46.
25. Smith cited in Simon Ford, *Hip Priest: The Story of Mark E. Smith and The Fall* (London: Quartet Books, 2003) 16.
26. Smith cited in Mick Middles (with Mark E. Smith), *The Fall* (London: Omnibus Press, [2003] 2008) 70.
27. Mark E. Smith (with Austin Collings), *Renegade: The Lives and Tales of Mark E. Smith* (London: Penguin Books, 2008) 41.

28. Ford, *Hip Priest*, 17.
29. Music View radio interview with Mark E. Smith, 1981, posted by karager23, "Mark E. Smith – Interview on NYC Radio in 1981," *YouTube* (March 6, 2012), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD7f3f_XtUM, accessed December 12, 2017.
30. Middles, *The Fall*, 74.
31. Brix Smith Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016) 168.
32. Smith cited in Middles, *The Fall*, 103.
33. Smith in scalagreen20, "Mark E. Smith Interview (2002)," *YouTube* (May 3, 2012), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92gwf8sz5X8, accessed December 12, 2017.
34. Smith in "Mark E. Smith Interview (2002)."
35. Smith in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 19.
36. Simpson, *The Fallen*, 94.
37. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 26.
38. See "Mark E. Smith Interview (2002)" and Middles, *The Fall*, 103-4
39. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 105.
40. Smith, *Renegade*, 92.
41. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 140. See in this regard, "The Fall Is Like a Nazi Organization," *Uncut* (September 1, 2017) available at https://www.pressreader.com/uk/uncut/20170901/283214443241711, accessed December 12, 2017.
42. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 161.
43. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 161.
44. See Mark Fisher, "Memorex for the Krakens: The Fall's Pulp Modernism," *k-punk* (May 8, 2006), available at k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/007759.html, accessed December 12, 2017.
45. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 18.
46. Smith, *Renegade*, 142.
47. Cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 40.
48. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 191.
49. Carroll cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 78.
50. Dione Newton, *The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith* (BBC4, 2005), documentary uploaded by tombassman, "The Fall - The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith," *YouTube* (July 27, 2011), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InXwZc4RS7M, accessed December 12, 2017.
51. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 280. See also Smith, *Renegade*, 31.
52. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 280.
53. Ford, *Hip Priest*, 14.
54. VBS.TV interview with Smith, uploaded by FRiB6890, "Mark E. Smith Interview - Soft Focus - Part One," *YouTube* (December 27, 2010), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05-ytS6ALLA, accessed December 12, 2017.
55. Smith cited in Steve Hanley (with Olivia Piekarski), *The Big Midweek: Life Inside The Fall* (Pontefract: Route, 2014) 110.
56. Smith cited in Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 173.

57. Smith cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 231.
58. Smith cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 256.
59. Smith cited in Mick Middles, *The Fall* (Northern Cream, 1994), documentary uploaded by FRiB6890, "The Fall – Unreleased Documentary," *YouTube* (March 25, 2011), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbjJ6Kw_oHA, accessed December 12, 2017.
60. Smith cited Middles, *The Fall*, 42.
61. Smith, *Renegade*, 26, 30
62. Frank Brunetti cited in Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 119.
63. Simpson, *The Fallen*, 132.
64. Bramah cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 105.
65. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 143.
66. Dave Bush cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 213.
67. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 189.
68. Middles, *The Fall*, 102.
69. Smith, *Renegade*, 104-5.
70. Carroll cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 80.
71. Smith, *Renegade*, 123.
72. Carroll cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 53-4.
73. Smith cited in Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 107.
74. Smith, *Renegade*, 123.
75. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 109.
76. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 217-8.
77. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 251.
78. Smith, *Renegade*, 173.
79. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 240.
80. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 53.
81. Smith, *Renegade*, 113, 122.
82. Smith, *Renegade*, 98-99.
83. Smith, *Renegade*, 193.
84. Peel cited in *The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith*.
85. Smith, *Renegade*, 79-80.
86. Smith, *Renegade*, 158.
87. Ford, *Hip Priest*, 254.
88. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 62.
89. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 62.
90. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 84.
91. Smith cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 19.
92. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 186.
93. Ford, *Hip Priest*, 122.
94. Smith cited in Middles, *The Fall*, 192.
95. Smith cited in Middles, *The Fall*, 198.
96. Hanley cited in Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 398.

97. Simpson, *The Fallen*, 198.
98. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 183.
99. Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 185.
100. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 271.
101. Smith cited in Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 117.
102. Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 120-1.
103. Schofield cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 203. See also Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 289.
104. Burns cited in Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 326.
105. Smith cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 189.
106. Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 328-9.
107. Smith cited in Start, *The Rise, The Fall, and the Rise*, 397. See also Hanley, *The Big Midweek*, 365.
108. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 258.
109. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 256-7.
110. Smith cited in Middles, *The Fall*, documentary.
111. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 266.
112. Smith cited in *The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith*.
113. Smith, *Renegade*, 51.
114. Hanley cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 261-2.
115. Smith, *Renegade*, 6.
116. Smith cited in Ford, *Hip Priest*, 279.
117. Smith cited in Simpson, *The Fallen*, 18.
118. Michael Goddard and Benjamin Halligan, "Introduction: Messing Up the Paintwork," in Goddard and Halligan, eds. *Mark E. Smith and The Fall: Art, Music and Politics* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) 3.
119. Goddard and Halligan, "Introduction," 25.
120. Owen Hatherley, "'Let me tell you about scientific management': The Fall, the Factory and the Disciplined Worker," in Goddard and Halligan, eds. *Mark E. Smith and The Fall*, 87.
121. Smith cited in Middles, *The Fall*, 189
122. Smith cited in Kevin E.G. Perry, "We Have Only This Excerpt: Mark E. Smith of The Fall Interviewed," *The Quietus* (November 24, 2011), available at http://thequietus.com/articles/07465-mark-e-smith-interview-the-fall, accessed December 12, 2017.
123. "Mark E. Smith Interview (2002)."
124. Middles, *The Fall*, 165.
125. Carlos Delgado, "*Black Mirror*: A Murky Reflection," *World Socialist Web Site* (February 4, 2017), available at http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/02/04/blac-f04.html, accessed December 12, 2017.
126. Hito Steyerl and Kate Crawford, "Data Streams," *The New Inquiry* (January 23, 2017), available at http://thenewinquiry.com/features/data-streams/, accessed December 9, 2017. See also Jiayang Fan, "How China Wants to Rate Its Citizens," *New Yorker* (November 3, 2015), available at https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/

how-china-wants-to-rate-its-citizens, accessed December 12, 2017.

127. Smith cited on BBC Channel 4 News, "Mark E. Smith on Music, Politics and Refugees," *YouTube* (February 15, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgaRehO-oiY, accessed December 12, 2017.
128. Smith, *Renegade*, 51.
129. Smith, *Renegade*, 36-7.
130. Smith, *Renegade*, 26.

7. Gaming the Class War

1. See Hal Foster, "What's Neo About the Neo-Avant-Garde?" *October* #70 (Fall 1994) 5-32. Roberts' notion of the core programme of the avant garde could be distinguished from the kind of "deferred action" that is conceived by the exhibition and book *The Power of the Avant-Garde: Now and Then*, organized by curator Ulrich Bischoff for BOZAR and shown at the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussles, in Fall-Winter 2017. The project invites some 15 leading contemporary artists – including David Claerbout, Marlene Dumas, William Forsythe, Gerhard Richter, Sean Scully and Luc Tuymans – to "enter into dialogue with colleagues from the historical avant-garde, from Ensor and Munch to the new movements just after the war." Neverminding that Ensor and Munch are not part of the "historical" avant garde, as Peter Bürger defined it, but part of the "bohemian" avant garde of the nineteenth century, the project description adds: "Today artists often feel a strong affinity with specific avant-garde works of art. Their choice and the dialogue with their own work forces us to look at these works from modern art in a different light." Although the works mentioned do include artists from the historical avant garde, such as Marcel Duchamp, Kazimir Malevich and Robert Delaunay, Bischoff's project mostly uses the avant garde to give cachet to contemporary art, and not to the contemporary avant garde. The difference between "now" and "then" is defined in multicultural terms as the difference between "different cultures." The concept for the project is essentially an occasion to show works from the avant garde alongside contemporary works that have been influenced by the historical canon. The exhibition does not engage with the actuality of the idea of the avant garde in any insightful manner, except to suggest, in relation to capitalist deterritoralization, that the world is in trasition, that machines are gaining in supremacy, that artists set out in new directions with new forms, and that artists are seismographs that bring unidentified ruptures into view. Contemporary world politics are not addressed, nor are the conditions of labour for most artists outside this grouping of blue-chip artists. Cottington, in contrast, has at least an appreciation of which artists today could be considered to be renewing in some way with the core programme of the avant garde as a radical emancipatory project, that is, as opposed to what Bürger defined as the "institution art." See the Visitor's Guide to *The Power of the Avant-Garde: Now and Then*, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, September 29, 2016-January 22, 2017, available at https://www.bozar.be/file/1593/download, accessed December 12, 2017.
2. John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015) 15.

3. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969-1970*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, [1991] 2007) 99.
4. Gregory Sholette, "Introduction: Welcome to Our Art World," in *Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. Kim Charnley (London: Pluto Press, 2017) 22-3.
5. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America (The United States' Military Contribution to National Security*, June 2015, available at http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/National_Military_Strategy_2015.pdf, accessed December 12, 2017.
6. Richard Barbrook and Petar Jandrić, "How To Be Modern: A Situationist Social Democrat's Adventures in Radio, Gaming and the Internet," *Institute of Network Cultures* (April 4, 2016) 17-8, available at http://networkcultures.org/blog/2016/04/04/how-to-be-modern-a-situationist-social-democrats-adventures-in-radio-gaming-and-the-internet/, accessed December 12, 2017.
7. Guy Debord, Section VI, in *Panegyric*, trans. James Brook (London: Verso, [1989] 1991), available at http://debordiana.chez.com/english/panegyric.htm, accessed December 12, 2017.
8. Barbrook and Jandrić, "How To Be Modern," 22.
9. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," in Marc James Léger, ed. *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) 121.
10. Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," 125.
11. Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," 124.
12. Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," 129.
13. Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," 129.
14. Gavin Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation: The Situationist Imaginary of New Forms of Labour in Art and Politics," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* #49-50 (2015) 62.
15. The Situationists cited in Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 64. See Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action" (1957) and "Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation" in Ken Knabb, ed. *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, [1981] 1995) 17-25, 43-5.
16. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 64.
17. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 68.
18. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, [1967] 2002), available at https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/guy-debord-the-society-of-the-spectacle.pdf., accessed December 12, 2017.
19. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 68. See "Correspondance Avec Un Cybernéticien," *Internationale Situationniste* #9 (1964) 44-8.
20. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 70.
21. On this subject see Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen, eds. *Expect Anything, Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere* (Copenhagen/

Brooklyn, Nebula/Autonomedia, 2011) and Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen, eds. *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere* (Copenhagen/Brooklyn, Nebula/Autonomedia, 2015). See also Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, *Playmates and Playboys at a Higher Level: J.V. Martin and the Situationist International* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

22. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 77.
23. See Slavoj Žižek, "Why Are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?" (1993) and "The Enlightenment in Laibach" (1994) in Zdenka Badovinac, Eda Čufer and Anthony Gardner, eds. *NSK, from* Kapital *to Capital: Neue Slowenische Kunst – An Event of the Final Decade of Yugoslavia* (Ljubljana/Cambridge: Moderna galerija/The MIT Press, 2015), 202-4, 205-12. See also Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse, "Subversive Affirmation: On Mimesis as a Strategy of Resistance," in Badovinac, Čufer and Gardner, eds. *NSK, from* Kapital *to Capital*, 266-76, BAVO, ed. *Cultural Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007) and Marc James Léger, "The Subject Supposed to Over-Identify: BAVO and the Fundamental Fantasy of a Cultural Avant Garde," in *Brave New Avant Garde: Essays on Contemporary Art and Politics* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012) 100-26.
24. Grindon, "Fantasies of Participation," 77.
25. Gene Ray, "Toward a Critical Art Theory," in Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, eds. *Art and Contemporary Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009) 79-80.
26. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).
27. Ray, "Toward a Critical Art Theory," 84.
28. Ray, "Toward a Critical Art Theory," 85.
29. Ray, "Toward a Critical Art Theory," 86. In his text for documenta 14, Ray takes a paradoxically "critical" and problematically "racialist" stance towards critical theory as part of the "ecocidal" and "genocidal" logic of modernity and western rationalism. See Gene Ray, "Writing the Ecocide-Genocide Knot: Indigenous Knowledge and Critical Theory in the Endgame," *documenta 14* (2017), available at http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/895_writing_the_ecocide_genocide_knot_indigenous_knowledge_and_critical_theory_in_the_endgame, accessed December 12, 2017.
30. Sven Lütticken, "Guy Debord and Cultural Revolution," *Grey Room* #52 (Summer 2013) 113.
31. Lütticken, "Guy Debord and Cultural Revolution," 115.
32. From Guy Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 194-5, cited in Lütticken, "Guy Debord and Cultural Revolution," 118.
33. Rod Dickinson, "Why I Hate Playing the Game of War," unpublished manuscript cited in Lütticken, "Guy Debord and Cultural Revolution," 119.
34. Lütticken, "Guy Debord and Cultural Revolution," 122.
35. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 106-7.
36. Steven J. Heims, "Introduction," in Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings:*

Cybernetics and Society (London: Free Association Books, [1954] 1989) xiii-iv.

37. Heims, "Introduction," xix.
38. Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, 46.
39. Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, 44. See also Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, [1948/1961] 1985) 121.
40. See John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1944] 1953).
41. Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, 185.
42. Wiener, *Cybernetics*, 177.
43. See Edward A. Shanken, "Introduction: Systems Thinking/Systems Art," in Shanken, ed. *Systems* (London/Cambridge: Whitechapel Gallery/The MIT Press, 2015) 14.
44. Debord in Alice Becker-Ho and Guy Debord, *A Game of War*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Atlas Press, [1987/2006] 2007) 21, 25-6.
45. See RSG, *Kriegespiel*, available at http://r-s-g.org/kriegspiel/, accessed December 12, 2017.
46. Alexander Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) 2.
47. Galloway, *Gaming*, 1.
48. Galloway, *Gaming*, 17.
49. Galloway, *Gaming*, 98, 102. See also Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) and Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
50. Galloway, *Gaming*, 126.
51. McKenzie Wark, *Gamer Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) eBook, 1.
52. Wark, *Gamer Theory*, 41.
53. Sholette, *Delirium and Resistance*, 212.
54. See Rasmussen, "The Self-Destruction of the Avant Garde," 126.
55. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in Écrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, [1966] 1977) 4.
56. Wark, *Gamer Theory*, 182, 186.
57. Norbert Wiener, *I Am a Mathematician (The Later Life of a Prodigy: An Autobiographical Account of the Mature Years and Career of Norbert Wiener)* (New York: Doubleday, 1956) 325.
58. Brian Schrank, *Avant-garde Videogames: Playing with Technoculture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014) 1.
59. Schrank, *Avant-garde Videogames*, 18.
60. Schrank, *Avant-garde Videogames*, 113.
61. Schrank, *Avant-garde Videogames*, 24.
62. Schrank, *Avant-garde Videogames*, 179.
63. Becker-Ho and Debord, *A Game of War*, 9.

64. Becker-Ho and Debord, *A Game of War*, 9.
65. Richard Barbrook and Fabian Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War *(the extended film script)* (London: Unpopular Books, 2012) 13, 15. See also the introductory film by Class Wargames member Ilze Black, available on the Class Wargames web site http://www.classwargames.net.
66. Barbrook and Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War, 15.
67. Barbrook and Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War, 16.
68. Barbrook and Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War, 25.
69. Barbrook and Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War, 32.
70. Barbrook and Tompsett, *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's* The Game of War, 38.
71. Richard Barbrook, *Class Wargames: Ludic Subversion Against Spectacular Capitalism* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2014) 34.
72. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 34.
73. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 35.
74. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 168.
75. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 141.
76. Barbrook considers himself a "Situationist Social Democrat." See Barbrook and Jandrić, "How To Be Modern," 26.
77. Žižek cited in Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 142.
78. Slavoj Žižek, "Afterword: Lenin's Choice," in V.I. Lenin, *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2004) 188.
79. See Žižek's discussion of this in Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2004) 203.
80. Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction: Robespierre, or, The 'Divine Violence' of Terror," in *Slavoj Žižek Presents Robespierre: Virtue and Terror* (London: Verso, 2007) xv. See also Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008).
81. Žižek, "Afterword," 189. See also Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2002).
82. For an instance of this insight from the point of view of the Zapatista struggle, see Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos, "The Other Player," in Marc James Léger and David Tomas, eds. *Zapantera Negra: An Artistic Encounter Between Black Panthers and Zapatistas* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2016) 199-205.
83. Slavoj Žižek, "Foreword: The Need to Censor Our Dreams," in Fredric Jameson, *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2016) vii.
84. Jameson, *An American Utopia*, 7-8.
85. Slavoj Žižek, "The Seeds of Imagination," in Jameson, *An American Utopia*, 306.
86. Žižek, "The Seeds of Imagination," 301.
87. Alain Badiou, "Sur la révolution russe d'Octobre 1917," *Réseau-salariat* (May 30, 2017), available at https://www.reseau-salariat-idf.com/single-post/2017/05/30/Sur-la-révolution-russe-d'Octobre-1917, accessed December 12, 2017.

88. McKenzie Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out of the 20th Century* (London: Verso, 2013) 2.
89. Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration*, 3.
90. Jameson, *An American Utopia*, 3.
91. Richard Barbrook (with Andy Cameron), *The Internet Revolution: From Dot-com Capitalism to Cybernetic Communism* (Amsterdam: Network Notebooks/Institute of Network Cultures, 2015).
92. Barbrook and Jandrić, "How To Be Modern," 5.
93. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) 208.
94. Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, "The Californian Ideology" (1995) in *The Internet Revolution*, 14.
95. Richard Barbrook, *Imaginary Futures: From Thinking Machines to the Global Village* (London: Pluto Press, 2007) 166.
96. Barbrook, *Imaginary Futures*, 229.
97. Barbrook, *Imaginary Futures*, 236-8.
98. Barbrook, *Imaginary Futures*, 250.
99. Barbrook and Cameron, "The Californian Ideology," 23.
100. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "Exhaustion/Depression," in Carolin Wiedemann and Soenke Zehle, eds. *Depletion Design: A Glossary of Network Ecologies* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2012) 79. See also Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and Geert Lovink, "A Call to the Army of Love and to the Army of Software," *InterActivist Info Exchange* (October 12, 2011), available at http://interactivist.autonomedia.org/node/32852, accessed December 12, 2017.
101. Barbrook and Jandrić, "How To Be Modern," 13.
102. Barbrook and Jandrić, "How To Be Modern," 14.
103. Richard Barbrook, "Cyber-Communism: How the Americans Are Superseding Capitalism in Cyberspace," in *The Internet Revolution*, 49.
104. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 108.
105. Hito Steyerl, "On Games, Or, Can Art Workers Think?" *New Left Review* #103 (January/February 2017) 102.
106. Steyerl, "On Games," 105-6.
107. Steyerl, "On Games," 116.
108. See Randal Johnson, "Editor's Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture," in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 1-25.
109. See Fundació Tàpies, "Conference by Hito Steyerl | Fundació Antoni Tàpies Barcelona," a presentation by Hito Steyerl of "Why Games? Can an Art Professional Think?" at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, June 6, 2016, *YouTube* (August 1, 2016), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRAAOvcBXrU, accessed December 12, 2017.
110. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays*

and Reflections, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 253.

111. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003) 3.
112. G.W.F. Hegel cited in Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, 5.
113. Manuel DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Swerve Editions/ Zone Books, 1991) 1-2.
114. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 31.
115. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 58.
116. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 80.
117. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 82.
118. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 83.
119. DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, 87.
120. See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London, Verso, 2009) 2, 6, 32.
121. Žižek cited in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Sophie Fiennes, USA, 2009).
122. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 219.
123. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 222.
124. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 255.
125. Henri Lefebvre, *L'idéologie structuraliste* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1971).
126. Barbrook, *Class Wargames*, 277, 301.
127. Jacques Lacan, *Lacan in Italia, 1953-1978 / Lacan en Italie, 1953-1978* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1978) 50. Lacan's Discourse of the Capitalist fits well enough the definition of playbour as a process that generates value rather than products, and where the means of production are the players themselves. See Julian Kücklich, "FCJ-250 Precarious Playbor: Modders and the Digital Games Industry," *The Fibreculture Journal* #5 (2005), available at http://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precarious-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/, accessed December 12, 2017.
128. Lacan, *Lacan in Italia, 1953-1978 / Lacan en Italie*, 53-5.
129. Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded: A Lacano-Marxian Perspective on the Current Economic Crisis," in Heiko Feldner, Fabio Vighi and Slavoj Žižek, eds. *States of Crisis and Post-Capitalist Scenarios* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014) 12-51.
130. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 12.
131. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 29. On the question of "Quesnay's riddle," which poses the problem that capitalism posits labour time as the source of wealth but at the same time strives to reduce labour time, see Heinrich's argument, based on a reading of Marx across the *Grundrisse* and the three volumes of *Capital*, that Marx does not consider that the technical development of the forces of production – at the expense of variable capital – inevitably leads to the collapse of capitalism. Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's* Capital, trans. Alexander Locascio (New York: Monthly Review Press, [2004] 2012) 175-8.
132. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 32.
133. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 32.

134. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012) 7.
135. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 35.
136. Michael Seeman, *Digital Tailspin: Ten Rules for the Internet After Snowden* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures / Network Notebooks, 2015) 58-9.
137. Feldner and Vighi, "The Matrix Cannot Be Reloaded," 38.

Conclusion: Pokémon Gods

1. Khaled Akil cited in Joobin Bekhrad, "Khaled Akil: Storyteller. Revealer of Truths. Armed to the Teeth," *khaledakil.com* (September 17, 2012), available at http://www.khaledakil.com/blog/, accessed December 12, 2017.
2. Alexander Alberro, "The Dialectics of Everyday Life: Martha Rosler and the Strategy of the Decoy," in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (Birmingham/Vienna/Cambrdidge: Ikon Gallery/Generali Foundation/The MIT Press, 1999) 79.
3. Cited in Slavoj Žižek, *Disparities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) 11.
4. Facts about Pokémon GO have been gleaned from the articles found on the Vox.com website, available at http://www.vox.com/culture/2016/7/12/12161130/pokemon-go-ios-android-update, accessed December 12, 2017, as well as Max Haiven, "Can Pikachu Save Fannie Mae? Value, Finance and Imagination in the Pokéconomy," *Cultural Studies* (2012) 1-26.
5. Franco Berardi refers to Google Glass as the ultimate coder and decoder of experience that transforms the world into something that is pre-packaged by neuro-totalitarian regimes of simultaneous deterritorialization and connection. See Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Neuro-Totalitarianism in Technomaya Goog-Colinization of the Experience and Neuro-Plastic Alternative* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014).
6. Timothy B. Lee, "Pokémon GO is everything that is wrong with late capitalism," *Vox* (July 12, 2016), available at http://www.vox.com/2016/7/12/12152728/pokemon-go-economic-problems, accessed December 12, 2017.
7. Haiven, "Can Pikachu Save Fannie Mae?" 1.
8. Haiven, "Can Pikachu Save Fannie Mae?" 3.
9. Haiven, "Can Pikachu Save Fannie Mae?" 11.
10. Max Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination: From Pokémon to Trump," in Nick Buxton and Deborah Eade, *State of Power 2017* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2017), available at http://longreads.tni.org/state-of-power/age-of-monsters/, accessed December 12, 2017.
11. Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination."
12. Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination."
13. Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination."
14. Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination."
15. Haiven, "Monsters of the Financialized Imagination."

16. See Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings, Volume Two*, eds. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006) 151-82.
17. See for example, Adrian Piper, "Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma," in *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Volume I: Selected Writings in Meta-Art 1968-1992* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996) 169-71.
18. Slavoj Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void: Economico-Philosophical Spandrels* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017) 186, 188, 190.
19. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
20. Žižek, *Disparities*, 15.
21. See the chapter on "Cultural Goodwill" in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1979] 1984).
22. Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (New York: The New Press, 2009).
23. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (London: Allen Lane, [1976] 1979).
24. Slavoj Žižek, *The Courage of Hopelessness: Chronicles of a Year of Acting Dangerously* (London: Allen Lane, 2017) eBook, 425.
25. Žižek, *The Courage of Hopelessness*, 428.
26. See Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* #31 (Summer 2005) 845.
27. See Ippolit Belinsky, "Slavoj Žižek – From Surplus-Value to Surplus-Enjoyment (Feb. 2017)," *YouTube* (March 5, 2017), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qB-0m64u3N7M, accessed December 12, 2017.
28. Žižek in "Slavoj Žižek – From Surplus-Value to Surplus-Enjoyment (Feb. 2017)."
29. Fredric Jameson, *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2016) 76.
30. Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void*, 119-20.
31. Žižek, *Disparities*, 23.
32. Žižek, *Disparities*, 27.

MINOR COMPOSITIONS

Other titles in the series:

Precarious Rhapsody – Franco "Bifo" Berardi
Imaginal Machines – Stevphen Shukaitis
New Lines of Alliance, New Spaces of Liberty – Felix Guattari and Antonio Negri
The Occupation Cookbook
User's Guide to Demanding the Impossible – Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination
Spectacular Capitalism – Richard Gilman-Opalsky
Markets Not Capitalism – Ed. Gary Chartier & Charles W. Johnson
Revolutions in Reverse – David Graeber
Undressing the Academy – University for Strategic Optimism
Communization & its Discontents – Ed. Benjamin Noys
19 & 20 – Colectivo Situaciones
El Martillo – Eclectic Electric Collective
Occupy everything! Reflections on 'why its kicking off everywhere' – Ed. Alessio Lunghi and Seth Wheeler
Punkademics – Ed. Zach Furness
[Open] Utopia – Thomas Moore & Stephen Duncombe
Contract & Contagion – Angela Mitropoulos
Squatting in Europe – Squatting Europe Kollective
Artpolitik: Social Anarchist Aesthetics in an Age of Fragmentation – Neala Schleuning
The Undercommons – Fred Moten & Stefano Harney
Nanopolitics Handbook – Nanopolitics Group
Precarious Communism: Manifest Mutations, Manifesto Detourned – Richard Gilman-Opalsky
FutureChe – John Gruntfest & Richard Gilman-Opalsky
Lives of the Orange Men – Major Waldemar Fydrich
State in Time – Irwin
Crisis to Insurrection – Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen
Occupation Culture – Alan W. Moore
Crisis to Insurrection – Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen
Gee Vaucher. Introspective – Ed. Stevphen Shukaitis
The Aesthetic of Our Anger – Ed. Mike Dines & Matthew Worley
The Way Out – Kasper Opstrup
Situating Ourselves in Displacement – Ed. Marc Herbst et al.
Organization after Social Media – Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter